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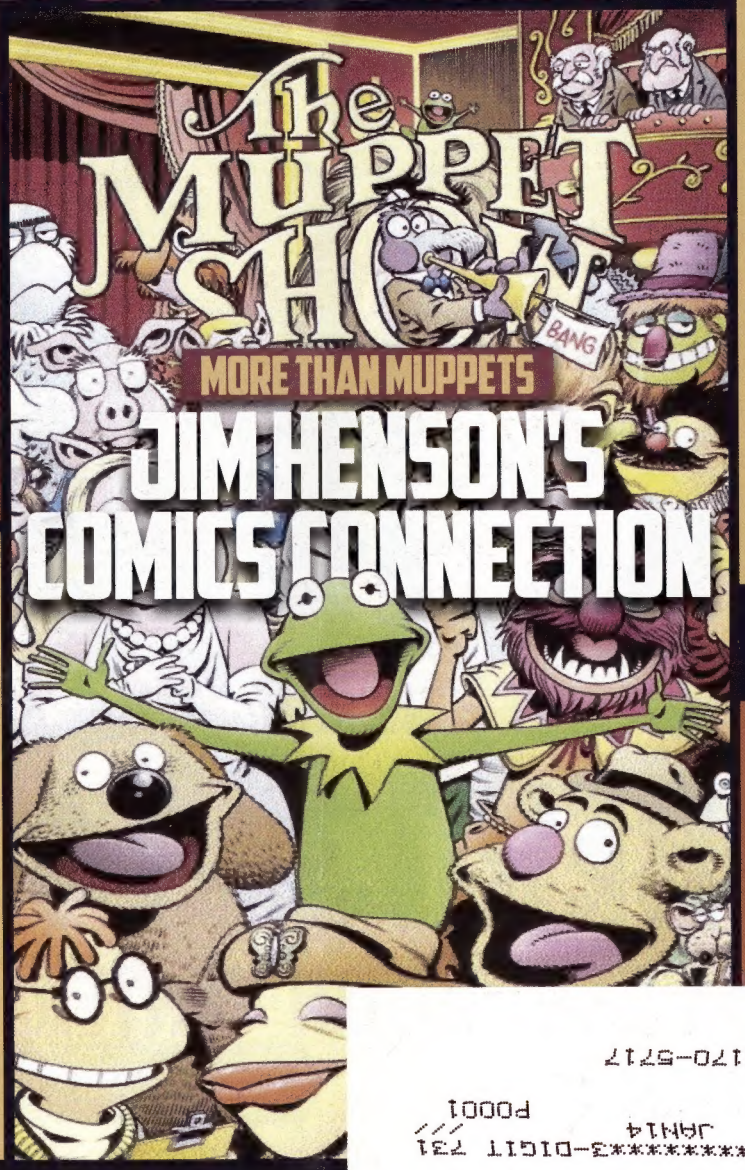

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THIS COSTUME I DESIGNED HAS HUNDREDS OF JETS WHICH I CAN TURN ON AUTOMATICALLY, TO BURST INTO FLAMES!
HOWEVER, THE IN-SIDE OF THE SUIT IS LINED WITH ASBESTOS, SO I CANNOT BE BURNED!
AND WITH THIS MINIATURE ROCKET MOTOR, TO ENABLE ME TO FLY, I WILL BE ABLE TO IMITATE THE TORCH IN EVERY WAY!
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ROCKET MOTOR FOR LIFT AND SPEED!

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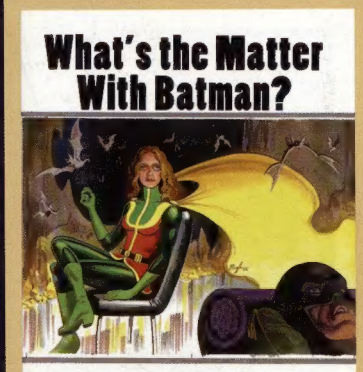
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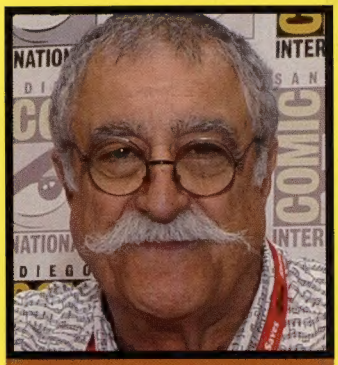
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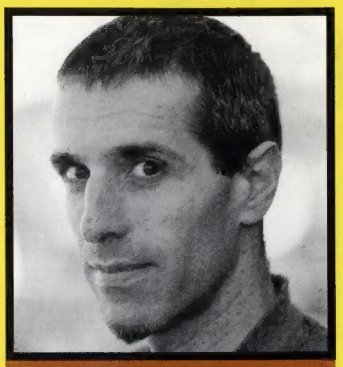
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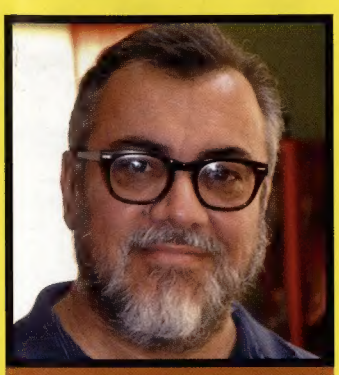
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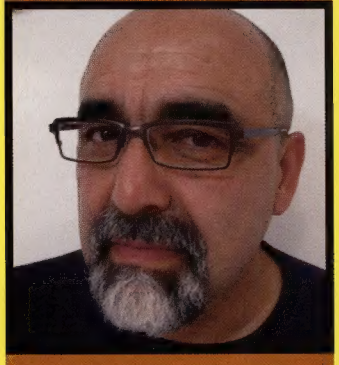
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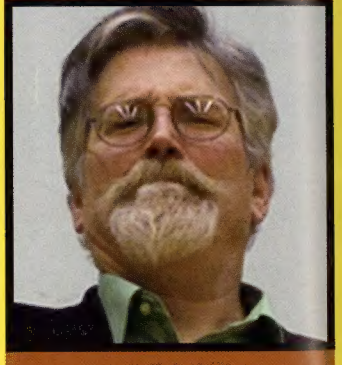
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FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this, the shootings during a midnight screening of *The Dark Knight Rises* at a movie theater in Aurora, Colo., are only a few days in the past and the accused gunman has received a preliminary hearing.

Many media commentators are still trying to come to grips with the event and what, if any, connection it has to comics. Of course, the usual "suspects" of violent videogames and other potential triggers have been suggested, but we may never know to our satisfaction what made this individual perpetrate such acts.

On NPR.org's *Monkey See* blog, comics commentator Glen Weldon wrote, "No reason will satisfy; no reason can, because the act occurred in reason's absence. We are left in its wake to guess and blame and, ultimately, finally, helplessly, to mourn.

"Batman didn't create this act of random violence. In a very real sense, he exists to help us respond to it."

He commented on one of the attractions of the super-hero concept: "They are a means by which we vicariously confront — and defeat — what threatens us." In the case of Batman, Weldon added, "And *how* he wins is just as important as *that* he wins: He seeks not vengeance, but justice — which is to say, he does not kill. Instead, he subdues his foes. Contains them."

Many are already looking for ways to help the healing process. *Dark Knight Rises* Director Christopher Nolan and actors Christian Bale, Anne Hathaway, and Gary Oldman issued statements expressing sympathy. Mile High Comics ran a huge back-issue sale with a percentage of proceeds marked for donation to the victims' families. As ever, we invite you to let us know your thoughts on this — or other topics — with an email to *ohso@krause.com*, a letter to *Oh, So?*, ***CBG*** Editorial Dept., 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54945, or via email directly to me. (In that case, please let me know if it's OK to print your letter.)

— Brent Frankenhoff
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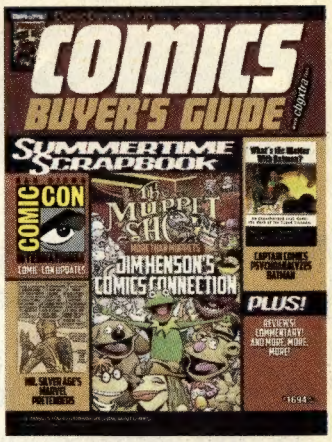

It's been our summer tradition to devote an issue to convention scrapbooks — with highlights from some of the major shows. This year, we expanded the scrapbook to add other topics that our contributors suggested.

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NEXT ISSUE: COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

- **The New 52 — One Year Later!** DC's relaunched super-hero universe marks its one-year anniversary. We join the celebration with a look back — *and* a peek into the future!

CBG #1695 — coming your way next!

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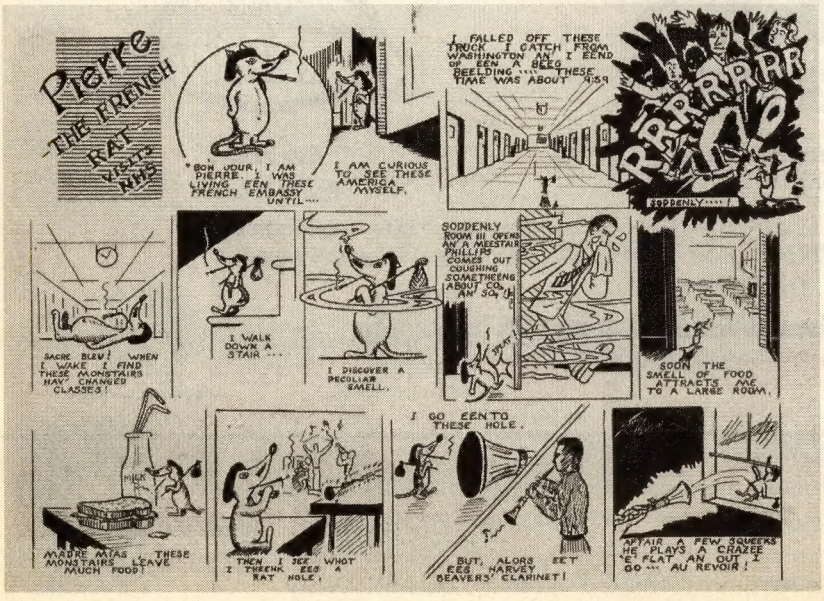
Don't forget the comics!

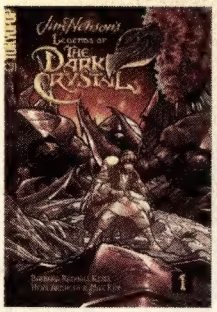
Comics shaped Jim Henson's creations then and now

by **WHITNEY GRACE**

Comic books were a minor merchandising option for Jim Henson, but, when he died in 1990, his properties fell into creative doldrums. Recovery took a long time, but by splitting the properties into three directions, each could be focused on individually. The question was: How? Each property has a massive fan following and the potential for new projects, but it is risky to invest in properties based solely on a nostalgia factor. Comic books, however, were a viable medium and posed little budgetary risk (compared to movies and TV) for such well-established companies as The Jim Henson Company, Disney, and Sesame Workshop. Why not take the chance?

Below: From the Henson Archives is an example of Jim Henson's comics work for his high school.


Pierre THE FRENCH RAT VISITS NHS
BON JOUR, PIERRE. I AM LIVING EEN THESE FRENCH EMBASSY UNTIL...
I AM CURIOUS TO SEE THESE AMERICA MYSELF.
I FALLED OFF THESE TRUCK I CATCH FROM WASHINGTON AN I EEND UP EEN A BEEG BEELDING ... THESE TIME WAS ABOUT 4:59
RRRRRRRR
SUDDENLY ...!
SACRE BLEU! WHEN I WAKE I FIND THESE MONSTAIRS HAV CHANGED CLASSES!
I WALK DOWN A STAIR ...
I DISCOVER A PECULIAR SMELL.
SUDDENLY ROOM 111 OPENS AN A MEESTAIR PHILLIPS COMES OUT COUGHING SOMETHEENG ABOUT CO AN 304
SOON THE SMELL OF FOOD ATTRACTS ME TO A LARGE ROOM.
MAIS MAIS MAIS MAIS MAIS MAIS MAIS MAIS



Sesame Street stories

The first comics based on Henson's work came with his contributions to the Children's Television Workshop's *Sesame Street*. (Henson only owned rights to his puppets, never to the actual show.) Two years after the show's 1969 debut, King Features (an established newspaper syndicate that published *Beetle Bailey*, *Hagar the Horrible*, and *Popeye*, among many, many others) printed the first *Sesame Street* comic strip. Cliff Roberts, one of the show's animators, was tapped to write and draw. Education, of course, was the main focus, and such concepts as shapes, opposites, and body parts were topics. As in the TV version, humor was a big part of the strip, and many strips were only one-shot comedic bits. The *Sesame Street* Muppets were absent from the strip the first two years, with Roberts creating new characters that later appeared in animated shorts. Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, and Cookie Monster later joined the cast; the strip ended in 1975.

1975 was a big year for Henson Associates. Michael Frith was hired as head art director and, within a few months, the group started filming *The Muppet Show*. Soon, several ideas for a Muppets comic strip floated around Henson Associates for the U.K. and U.S. Concepts were designed, there was a proposal for *Look-In* magazine, and Frith submitted sample comic strips to two syndicates. King Features picked up the strip, but none of the original sample artists was selected to write or draw. Instead, Henson Associates enlisted the Gilchrist brothers, Brad and Guy, who co-wrote and drew the strip. Henson and Frith reviewed the strip commenting on necessary changes, which the Gilchrists made while maintaining their own style. It began in 1981 in more than 660 newspapers worldwide, Tor collected the strips in book form, but, in 1986, the strip ended.

Since *The Muppet Show* was shot in England, it was understandable that the U.K. received exclusive content meant only for that market. *The Muppet Show Annuals* contained photographs, games, and comics running from 1977-1984. In 1979, U.K. fans were also treated to *The Comic Muppet Book* by Graham Thompson, who also illustrated the graphic novel *Muppets at Sea*.

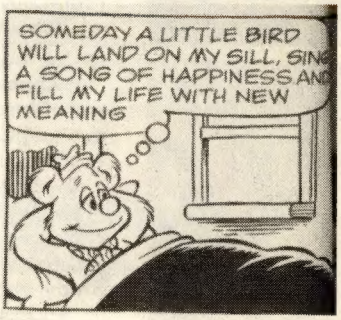
Marvel's Muppets and more

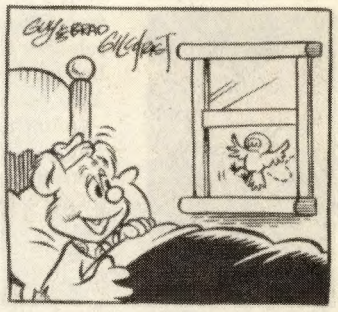
Following *The Muppet Show*, Henson had dozens of other projects rattling around his imagination, and the 1980s became his decade. Frith worked his magic on Marvel, which began to print Henson-associated comics in 1983, beginning with an adaptation of *The Dark Crystal*. Henson's third Muppet movie, *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, came next as a magazine-sized *Marvel Super Special* in 1984. The last of Henson's movies to be adapted into comics format was *Labyrinth* in 1986. All three adaptations were faithful to the original scripts with variations on character designs (humans as Whatnot puppets) and story development with the usual 1980s coloring.

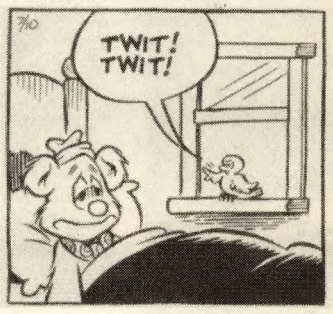
After the three *Marvel Super Specials*, enter Sid Jacobson and the Star Comics imprint: Marvel's line of comics for children at the time. Jacobson worked on the prior Henson-licensed comics and, following a deal with Marvel Productions, the comics giant's animation subsidiary, produced *Fraggle Rock* the animated series and the Emmy-winning *The Muppet Babies*. Jacobson also headed the comic book tie-ins.

The Muppet Babies comic book ran bi-monthly from 1985 to 1989 with new stories featuring toddler Muppets. After 26 issues, the series ended, but, when Jacobson became Harvey Comics editor in chief in the 1990s, he once more oversaw *The Muppet Babies* comic. Harvey Comics, however, did not create new material; it simply reprinted the Star Comics with new cover art, and the arrangement lasted for only six issues and two specials.

Marvel/Star's *Fraggle Rock* comics had a far shorter time in comic-book form than the TV series (1983-1987) enjoyed. The Fraggle comics started in 1985 with the first two issues featuring new stories and the others TV script adaptations; the series ended after #8. However, throughout the 1980s, *Muppet Magazine* (a quarterly publication that brought fans all things Muppet) often printed *Muppet Babies*, classic Muppets, and *Fraggle Rock* comics in a special section.







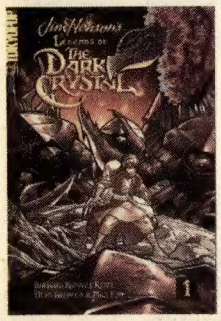
Other Henson-based comics

By the end of the '80s, Henson was in discussion with the Walt Disney Company to purchase his company. Negotiations were made in 1989, along with a handshake contract of sale. Henson would have gone back to focusing on creative projects but he died May 16, 1990. The Disney deal fell apart, and Henson Associates continued on its own, though few comics were published in the 1990s, except for two.

Disney's Hollywood Comics adapted *Dinosaurs* into two comics in 1992-93, followed by a trade paperback; later, they were reprinted in *Disney Adventures* magazine.

A *Dog City* newspaper strip, based on the Nelvana live-action/puppet co-production series, was developed and short-lived in 1994. It isn't clear at this point how many newspapers picked it up for a time.

A project dubbed Muppet Comix was proposed in 1998 with *Miss Piggy in Wonderland* and *The Adventures of Supergonzo*, but, like many other projects, wasn't developed beyond the initial idea.



A comics renaissance

In the early 2000s, Henson's properties were split: EM.TV & Merchandising AG owned The Jim Henson Company (Henson Associates had changed its name in 1997) from 2000 to 2003, and it sold the *Sesame Street* character rights to Sesame Workshop (formerly Children's Television Workshop) in 2000. The Henson family then repurchased The Muppets and sold them to the Walt Disney Company a year later.

Comics activity was quiet from all companies, until The Jim Henson Company struck a deal with manga publisher Tokyopop to create new stories based on *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal. Return to the Labyrinth* served as a sequel, while *Legends of the Dark Crystal* became a prequel. *Farscape*, a cult science-fiction series, was also given a comics makeover by WildStorm in 2002, followed by Boom! Studio comic books from 2009 to 2011.

Archaia approached The Jim Henson Company with a plan to rejuvenate excitement for its franchises by limiting comics and graphic novel releases to a few each year. So far, the partnership has been a success. Fans snapped up new *Fraggle Rock* comics, which were later collected in hardcover — and the old Star comics are being published as *Fraggle Classics. The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth* were treated with the same care, bringing Brian Froud — the movies' conceptual designer — to set up the mythos for *The Dark Crystal: Creation Myths* Vol. 1 and a 2012 *Labyrinth* prequel.

Archaia also dug through the Henson archives and found an unproduced teleplay for *The Storyteller*, which became a graphic novel. Moreover, it made history when *A Tale of Sand* was published: a graphic-novel adaptation of an unfilmed script by Henson and Muppet writer Jerry Juhl. Written in 1967, *A Tale of Sand* is a translation and prime example of Henson's interest in "escaping reality's rat race," expressed in his short films *The Cube* and *Time Piece*. It was voted three awards among the 2012 Eisner Awards recipients at Comic-Con International: San Diego. They were for Best Graphic Album – New; Best Penciller/Inker (Ramón K. Pérez, artist); and Best Publication Design (Eric Skillman, designer).

And more is coming from Archaia: volume two of *Creation Myths*, more *Storyteller* and *Fraggle Rock*, and projects that may even top *A Tale of Sand*.

Sesame Workshop had a **Tokyopop** deal in 2005 to produce *Sesame Street* cine-manga (photographs of the TV show cut into panels with pasted word balloons) and released three books.

Understanding comic books' educational benefits, Sesame Workshop has signed an agreement with **Ape Entertainment**, licensor of DreamWorks comics and a publisher of other children's comics. Ape Entertainment will create new stories, operating the comic book in a fashion similar to the show. Each will be closely monitored with final approval from Sesame Workshop to preserve the *Street's* goals to educate and entertain. A release date hasn't been set, but each issue will get a hardcover edition.

More Muppets

For a time, The Walt Disney Company didn't do much with The Muppets for internal reasons; in fact, it didn't look as if it would do much except re-release old material, until it, too, joined the recent comics resurgence. Disney had British cartoonist Roger Langridge write and draw comics patterned on *The Muppet Show*. Langridge was originally set to make comics for *Disney Adventures*, but the magazine had ceased publication in 2007. Boom! Studios then partnered with Disney and published Langridge's *Meet the Muppets* in 2009. The comics saw several reprintings, more *Muppet Show* comics were produced, along with story arcs based on classic literature. Boom! continued to publish Muppet books, until 2011, when Disney acquired Marvel and discontinued its license with Boom!

Disney has not announced new Muppet comics but is republishing the Boom! titles under the Marvel banner. With the recent increase in Muppet popularity, thanks to the 2011 box office hit *The Muppets*, fans can hope that Disney will continue to make new Muppet comics adventures.

Disney, The Jim Henson Company, and Sesame Workshop — and, especially, fans — are reaping the rewards of the latest creative efforts. Long-starved appetites for new content that capture the magic of the originals are being fed by comics. In many ways, in fact, the new comics have regenerated interest in Henson's work. The three companies are tapping into the comic-book market at the perfect time, and Henson's work is living on in a medium that once inspired him.

A special thanks to Henson Archivist Karen Falk, Muppets' manager Debbie McClellan, The Jim Henson Company's public relations representative Nicole Goldman, Stephen Christy of Archaia, David Hedgecock of Ape Entertainment, and the Tough Pig boys Joe Hennes and Ryan. Don't forget to check the fantastic Muppet Wiki, where you'll find some of the information used in this article — and more.

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When Selina Kyle returned to Batman's life, she tried a number of new looks

The return of Catwoman!

Editor's note: *Due to a production error, the first page of this column did not appear in* **CBG** *#1693. We're re-running the entire column for your convenience.*

by CRAIG "MR. SILVER AGE" SHUTT

Dear Mr. Silver Age,

I see the new Batman movie is going to feature Catwoman! But the pictures I've seen don't look like any Catwoman I've ever known! Why didn't they use the version so familiar to us?

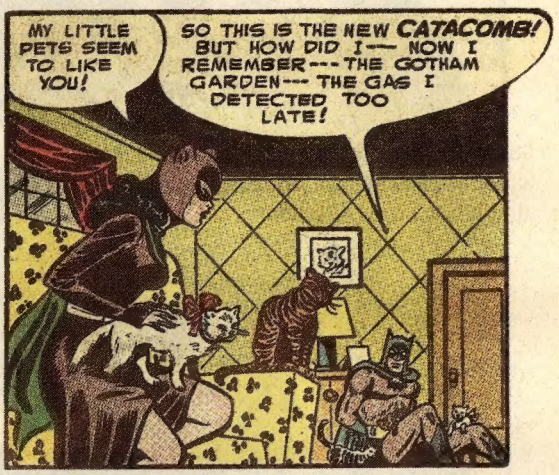
Pamela I.
Arkham Asylum

Mr. Silver Age says: Which version would that be, Pammy? The truth is, Catwoman has gone through plenty of changes in her career (especially in her get-up), even if we just focus on the comics Catlady. That was especially the case during her revival in the mid-1960s, during the halcyon Silver Age of Comics — and Batmania — after what had become a long catnap. Her return to Batman's life not only came about in furtive, feline ways but also involved multiple wardrobe changes.

After earlier appearances as a slinky jewel thief, Catwoman made the dubious fashion choice of donning a giant cat head for her robberies in *Batman* #3.

As we all know, Selina Kyle made her debut in *Batman* #1 (Spr 40) as a slinky jewel thief (or, at least, we know it now). She apparently was so impressive that she returned in the next two issues, a record not even The Joker could match (although he came close). In that third issue, The Cat-Woman made the fashion *faux pas* of donning a giant mascot-like cat head to go with her slinky gown.

She continued using variations on that goofy look for way too long and finally changed to her familiar purple dress and cowl with green cape in *Batman* #35 (Jul 46). She kept that look, with a few modifications, for the rest of her Golden Age career, which was substantial. But then science-fiction aliens and other fads intervened, and Batman's traditional rogues fell out of favor. She disappeared after one last tangle with The Dynamic Duo in *Detective Comics* #211 (Sep 54).


MY LITTLE PETS SEEM TO LIKE YOU!
SO THIS IS THE NEW CATACOMB! BUT HOW DID I— NOW I REMEMBER--- THE GOTHAM GARDEN--- THE GAS I DETECTED TOO LATE!

Before returning to the DC universe, Catwoman made a number of appearances in reprints, usually decked out in her well-known look, as in *80 Page Giant* #5.

Ten years later, as Batman's "New Look" was ramping up, DC reminded us that she'd used to be near the top of his rogues' gallery.

She appeared in *80 Page Giant* #5 (Dec 64), Batman's first starring role there, with a reprint as one of his "Greatest Adventures." Then she appeared in the Sunday newspaper-strip reprint in the 80-Page Giant issue of *Batman* #176 (Dec 65) as one of Batman's "Most Fantastic Foes." No argument here.

She was even the featured villain in a mini-comic premium in Kellogg's Pop-Tarts in 1966! Clearly, *something* was up, and I'm guessing this last appearance owed much of its demand to a certain TV show making its debut in January 1966, in which her part was played by Julie Newmar. It certainly got *my* attention.

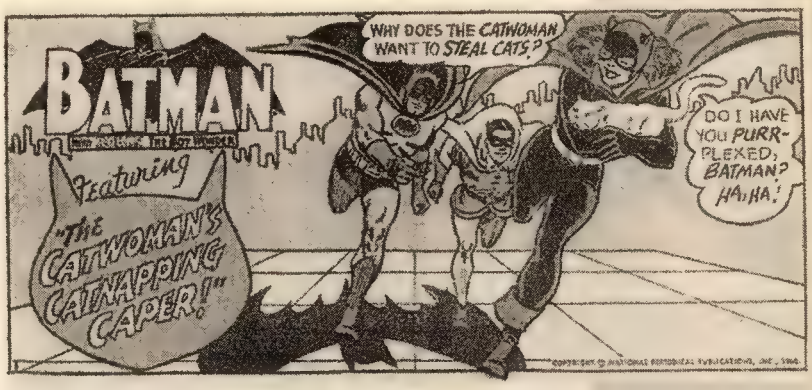
SUPERMAN'S GIRL FRIEND
LOIS LANE
NOV. NO. 70
IT'S A CATASTROPHE FOR SUPERMAN WHEN HE'S BEWITCHED BY BATMAN'S FELINE FOE IN... "The CATWOMAN'S BLACK MAGIC!"
TURNING SUPERMAN INTO A CAT WAS MY MOST PURR-FECT CRIME, LOIS! AND NOW I'LL CHANGE YOU INTO A MOUSE!
SUPERPUSSYCAT formerly SUPERMAN
HABITAT KRYPTONITE CAGE
SPECIAL GUEST VILLAIN!... The PENGUIN

Selina Kyle updated her look a bit before tackling Superman and Batman in the pages of *Lois Lane* #70, after taking Lo out of action.

A GOOD QUESTION, LOIS! AND THE ANSWER IS...
THE CATWOMAN. SHE'S ONE OF BATMAN'S ARCH FOES... SHE ALWAYS USES CATS AS THE INSPIRATION FOR HER CRIMES!
HELLO, MISS LANE! RAJAH AND I WERE PLAYING A LITTLE CAT AND MOUSE GAME WITH YOU!

With that kind of build-up, her return to comics surprised readers: It came with "The Catwoman's Black Magic!" in *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* #70 (Nov 66)! She now wore a skin-tight black costume reminiscent of the TV Catwoman, with the traditional cat-cowl and green cape.

Her cunning plan involved capturing Lois, brainwashing her into being evil, and then using her to kill The Penguin, so Selina could steal his loot. Then, when the cops closed in, they'd capture Lois and never know that the *real* Catwoman had


BATMAN
featuring
"THE CATWOMAN'S CATNAPPING CAPER!"
WHY DOES THE CATWOMAN WANT TO STEAL CATS?
DO I HAVE YOU PURR-PLEXED, BATMAN? HA, HA!

returned to crime. Another part of the plan involved Catwoman pretending to be Lois dressed up as The Catwoman and using magic to turn The Man of Steel into a cat that she then imprisoned in a green kryptonite cage.

Needless to say, a plan this cunning took two issues to unfold and required a partnership between Lois and Lana Lang and a conference with President Johnson. Ultimately, Batman and Robin led Catwoman off in bat-cuffs, and our gals freed Supes. Oops, almost forgot the ***Spoiler Warning***.

Why was it left to Mort Weisinger and Kurt Schaffenberger (along with writer Leo Dorfman) to set the style for the return of Batman's more felonious female feline foe? That's a question for the ages, all right. I have no answers for that one.

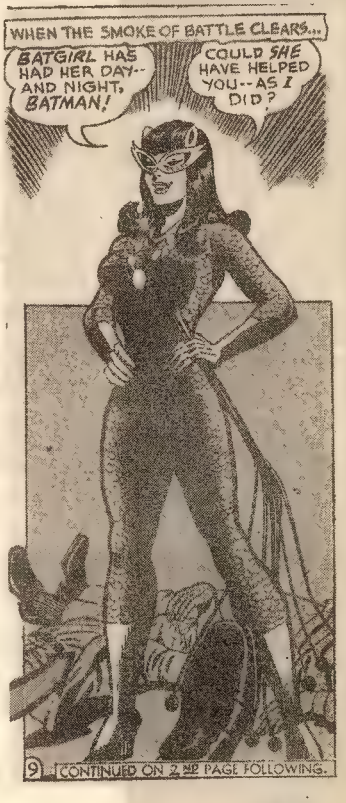
Catwoman even made an appearance in a Kellogg's Pop-Tart premium comic book before she managed to reappear in Silver Age comics after her long hiatus.

In any event, it took a full year before Catwoman returned to Batman's titles. Maybe she had to serve her jail time first, since, when she arrived on the final page of *Detective* #369 (Nov 67), she was footloose and fancy-free. Sadly, what inspired her to return was a front-page newspaper story on Batgirl's accomplishments. "Complimented By Caped Crusader," the sub-headline said. No, really.

"Looks to me like Batgirl is making a play for Batman," Catwoman erroneously surmised. "I've known Batman a lot longer than that Jill-Come-Lately! If he belongs to anybody, he belongs to The Catwoman!" Oh, boy.

She made her case a few weeks later in "Catwoman Sets Her Claws for Batman!" in *Batman* #197 (Dec 67). This time, the woman at the wheel of The Kitty Car wore a skin-tight dark green costume in some odd scalloped texture and an elaborate, pointed domino mask and light green boots and gloves. Yikes. She wielded her cat o' nine tails to capture some crooks and prove she made a better partner than Batgirl.

Batman was skeptical but willing to believe, but Batgirl was not charmed. Both crime-fighting ladies showed up at the next crime scene, and Batgirl needed Catwoman's help to corral the


WHEN THE SMOKE OF BATTLE CLEARS...
BATGIRL HAS HAD HER DAY-- AND NIGHT, BATMAN!
COULD SHE HAVE HELPED YOU--AS I DID?
9 CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

Our favorite cat burglar radically changed her look to compete against Batgirl to win The Caped Crusader's affections in *Batman* #197.

SOMEWHERE IN GOTHAM CITY, IN A SECRET HIDEAWAY KNOWN ONLY TO THE OVERLORDS OF THE UNDERWORLD -- SITS A LIVING ROGUES' GALLERY OF CRIMEDOM'S CLEVEREST CROOKS...
ALL RIGHT, PENGUIN -- THIS MEETING YOU SUMMONED US TO BETTER BE NO GAG!
YOU INTERRUPTED MY CATNAP--
I WAS TRYING ON A NEW HAT WHEN YOUR BIRDY VOICE ASSURED ME IT WAS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
BATMAN'S DEATH!
AND OURS AS WELL!
CLUE US IN! WHOSE LIFE? WHOSE DEATH?
PENGUIN
MAD HATTER
CLUE MASTER
CAT WOMAN
GETAWAY GENIUS
JOKER
JOHNNY WITTS

The newly green-suited Catwoman sat down with other rogues from the gallery to aid The Caped Crusader in *Batman* #201.

criminals. Batman was impressed but refused to admit his obvious love for Selina (she thought), which frustrated her. Actually, The World's Greatest Detective didn't realize she had a crush on him, the big dope. He finally expressed his suspicions to The Boy Wonder, to which Robin replied, "Duh."

At her wit's end, Catwoman captured our Terrific Trio and gave Batman an ultimatum: Marry her or she'd return to crime. Bats declined, so she robbed some people and offered again to return the loot if Batman would marry her. He again declined, and Batgirl decided enough was enough and saved the day. As Catwoman was led off to jail, she scoffed at Batgirl's denials of wanting Batman to herself.

Catwoman returned in the very next issue, #198 (Feb 67), but it was another 80-Page Giant "All-Villain Issue," which she surely wasn't going to miss at this point. Throughout the Silver Age, she made a habit of ensuring she was included in just about any Batman-reprint package into which she could worm her way.

The Felonious Feline was back a mere three issues later, in "Batman's Gangland Guardians!" in *Batman* #201 (May 68). I'm not sure how she'd missed out on the "anniversary" celebration in *Batman* #200, since The Scarecrow, Joker, Penguin, and Killer Moth (?) had helped The Dynamic Duo celebrate. Maybe she hadn't been paroled yet. As it was, Gotham City seemed to have a very liberal parole policy.

Several rogues joined Catwoman and other villains in #201 to discuss what to do about Batman. But killing him wasn't on the table this time. The group comprised Joker, Catwoman, Mad Hatter, Penguin, Clue Master, Getaway Genius, and Johnny Witts, the latter three having appeared in recent bat-adventures.

AH-H-H PURR-R-R NOW WE FORM AN UNBEATABLE TEAM!
BUT WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?
BESIDES THE LOOT WE SPLIT, YOU HELP ME OUTWIT BATMAN -- I HELP YOU REVENGE YOURSELVES ON THE MEN WHO SENT YOU TO PRISON!
A BATTLE OF THE SEXES, EH? WHAT'S OUR FIRST OBJECTIVE?

Catwoman changed her look again in *Batman* #210 and she outfitted nine recent felons in the same duds to be her "Feline Furies."

Pengy had been tipped that a West Coast crime syndicate was moving into Gotham, with its first order of business to kill Batman. He pointed out that, with Batman gone, there would be no one to keep the syndicate from killing all of them, too — which it surely would do. So they agreed that they had to protect Batman from the syndicate's assassination attempts. What irony!

Mayhem ensued, as The Caped Crusader narrowly missed death time after time without knowing how he'd done it. Ultimately, he learned what (other) villain was behind the death traps, but he never did learn who his guardian angels had been.

Catwoman steered clear of Bats for eight entire issues this time, returning in "The Case of the Purr-loined Pearl!" in *Batman* #210 (Mar 69). She'd apparently used her time off to create yet another costume, this time a slinky blue number with light blue leggings; navy bodice, gloves, and boots; and red mask and boot cuffs. Double yikes. The mask gave her a certain demonic appearance that none of her other costumes had had, but it wasn't her best look.

She apparently had gone legit once again, opening a "slenderizing" salon and selling her beloved Kitty Car. Try as he might, Batman couldn't pin anything on her until she put her big plan into action. She contacted eight women inmates about to be released — including Light Laura, Florid Flo, Big Barbara, Sultry Sarah, and Timid Trixie. (Kids, don't try giving yourself alliterative nicknames like this at home. Leave it to the pros.)

Catwoman's plan was to shape up these former cons and turn them into doubles for her, all dressed in her new sultry costume, which would confound Batman as they pulled off the purr-fect crime. Sorry, but you have to give me credit for restraint until now. Sadly for Selina, things didn't go according to plan, and she wound up being ensnared by a kitten and a ball of yarn. How appropriate.

Ms. Kyle apparently wore out her welcome in the Bat-books, taking three years before she popped up again. Unfortunately, she did not spend the time creating a new costume. Instead, she returned in yet another heroine's series well away from her usual haunts, ending her Silver Age career just as she had begun it.

It started when The Amazonian Princess (now in her Emma Peel phase) and her buddy I Ching flew to Tibet in *Wonder Woman* #201 (Aug 72). They were there to learn more about The Fist of Flame, a gem worshipped by a small cult. Some of the cult's members had kidnapped her new buddy Johnny Double and attacked her, so she flew to their home to see what the heck was up with that.

After trekking through a blinding snowstorm along a perilous mountainous trail, they arrived to find The Fist, which, in fact, was an enormous ruby embedded in a gigantic idol's forehead. Diana retrieved the stone after battling the cult, only to be knocked to the ground when Catwoman showed up.

Why was Catwoman seeking a giant Tibetan ruby just as Diana Prince braved life and limb to find it herself? As noted about Catwoman's first Silver Age adventure, just because this column is called "Ask Mr. Silver Age" doesn't mean I can answer every question. Let's just go with it.

Wouldn't you know it, Catwoman, too, was kayoed by the cult. The two costumed women then had to face off with samurai swords (don't ask) while suspended over an inferno. The winner would be enslaved; the loser would be sushi.

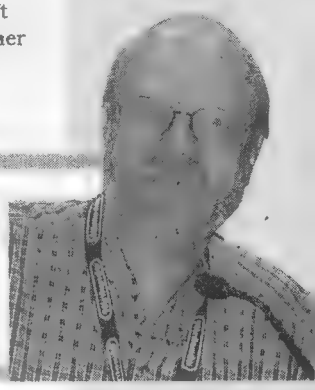
Needless to say, they freed themselves and were escaping when The Fist somehow transported them all to another dimension/world — aka Nehwon. (Read it backward.) That place turned out to be the home to Fafhrd and The Gray Mouser, who were about to star in their own soon-to-be-gone DC comic book, *Swords of Sorcery*. Once the mayhem of meeting each other died down in *Wonder Woman* #202 (Oct 72), the two duos discovered they had mutual interests, as the barbarians were seeking a related gem.

Fafhrd and The Amazon (and I Ching) teamed up, as did (wait for it) The Mouser and The Cat. They battled an evil sorcerer and his army of minions in their own ways and set things right. That involved bringing the barbarian heroes with them to the 20th century. But one look around at the traffic and modern conveniences, and the two of them hopped the next interdimensional portal outta there.

That elaborate marketing misadventure apparently tuckered out Selina, since she went into hiding until "The Curious Case of the Catwoman's Coincidences!" in *Batman* #266 (Aug 75). She's managed to hang in there on and off since, making a dramatic return in recent years with her goggled look, complete with low-zippered catsuit and less subtle approaches to flirting.

Cats may not change their spots, but I wouldn't be surprised to see Catwoman pop up in yet another costume any day.

Catwoman made her final Silver Age appearance in *Wonder Woman* #202, where she teamed with Diana and Fafhrd and The Gray Mouser.



Known to fans worldwide as "Mr. Silver Age," **CRAIG SHUTT** has waxed nostalgic about comics of old in ***CBG*** since 1992. Send comments and suggestions to ***craigshutt@ameritech.net***.

"Ask Mr. Silver Age" is © 2012 Craig Shutt

These guys wanted to be super-heroes in the worst way — and that's the way they did it!

Marvel's great pretenders

by CRAIG "MR. SILVER AGE" SHUTT

Dear Mr. Silver Age,

I hate it when someone impersonates a hero by mind-swapping with him! Does that kind of thing happen a lot?

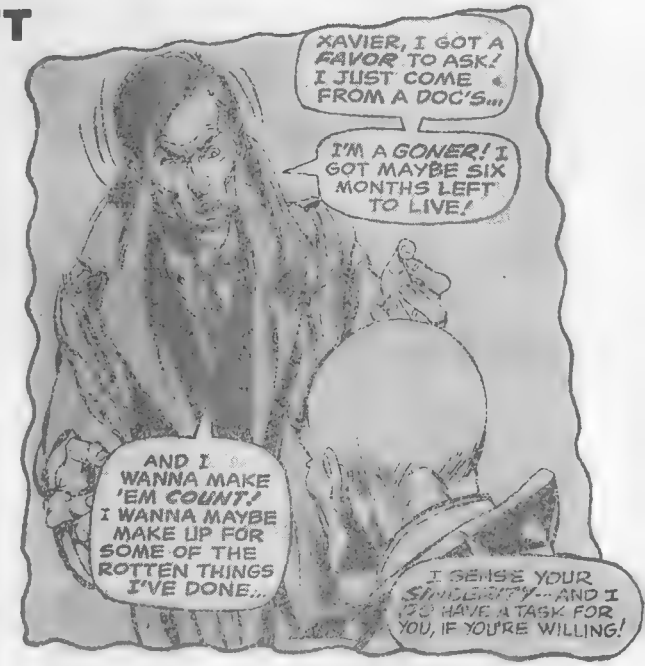
Boston B.
Nanda Parbat

Mr. Silver Age says: Impersonations occurred more than you'd think back in The Silver Age, Bos. Mind-swapping was a great comic-book gimmick back then — heck, it's still a great *movie* gimmick!

But heroes weren't impersonated strictly by having someone swap bodies. There were *lots* of ways to pretend to be a super-hero. Here's my list of the Top 10 Impersonations from Silver Age Marvel comics (*i.e.*, through 1970), ranked from bottom to top:

NO NEED FOR ANYONE TO GET UPTIGHT!
I JUST WANTED TO THANK PARKER FOR BRINGING ME MY COSTUME!
OKAY! OKAY! YOU PROMISED YOU'D NEVER BARGE IN ON ME LIKE THIS AGAIN!

Hobie Brown helped out his pal Spider-Man by dressing up as The Wall-Crawler without knowing exactly why in *Amazing Spider-Man* #87.


XAVIER, I GOT A FAVOR TO ASK! I JUST COME FROM A DOC'S...
I'M A GONER! I GOT MAYBE SIX MONTHS LEFT TO LIVE!
AND I WANNA MAKE 'EM COUNT! I WANNA MAYBE MAKE UP FOR SOME OF THE ROTTEN THINGS I'VE DONE...
I SENSE YOUR SINCERITY--AND I DO HAVE A TASK FOR YOU, IF YOU'RE WILLING!

As revealed in *X-Men* #65, The Changeling died while disguised as Professor X in #42, making Prof's death neither a dream nor an Imaginary Tale.

10. Hobie Brown in "Unmasked at Last!" in *Amazing Spider-Man* #87 (Aug 70). On occasion, heroes masqueraded as other heroes — in this case, with not only the hero's knowledge but also his instigation. The cunning plan resulted from Peter Parker, unknowingly stricken with the flu, dazedly wandering to Gwen's house and revealing his identity to his friends. Yikes.

His remedy came right out of the *Clark Kent Instant-Plot-Resolver Manual.* Spidey found his friend Hobie, who has been given a break by Spidey when he made the poor decision to become The Prowler (in *Amazing Spider-Man* #79). At Spidey's direction, Hobie dressed in the spider-suit and swung into Gwen's house while Parker was there and provided an alternative explanation to Pete's earlier appearance with a spider-suit.

Everyone seemed to buy it (although I doubt Captain Stacy did), and Hobie swung away. As he left the costume behind, he decided he owed Spidey the

discretion of not trying to figure out what wasn't too tough to deduce about this situation.

9. The Changeling in "Before I'd Be Slave" in *X-Men* #65 (Feb 70). Retconned body swaps are the worst, because we know about them only in the aftermath. In this case, it was done to revive the formerly deceased Professor X, who began his dirt nap in "The Death of Professor X!" in *X-Men* #42 (May 68).

That cover boldly (and with tongue in cheek) proclaimed: "Not a Hoax! Not a Dream! Not an Imaginary Tale! This is for real!" Ironically, that tweaking of the Distinguished Competition turned out to be untrue, when the prof showed up hale and hearty (well, for Prof. X) in #65.

He revealed that The Changeling had asked to help out, since he had six months to live and wanted to atone for his past deeds. Xavier suggested Changeling take his place so he could concentrate on important matters, and he even gave Jean Grey (who knew of the switch) and him some of his mental powers to help. So it was The Changeling, not the prof, who had died at the hands of Grotesk. How convenient.

Happy Hogan took the Iron Man armor for a spin in *Tales of Suspense* #84 and learned it was a little hard to handle in the corners.

8. Happy Hogan in "The Other Iron Man" in *Tales of Suspense* #84 (Dec 66). When Tony Stark landed in the hospital with heart problems, the media speculated on why Iron Man wasn't around. Happy, who knew his boss' secret, convinced Tony to let him mislead the press by taking a spin in the armor.

Despite his skill with automobiles, Happy was a little shaky controlling the armor, but he avoided any major problems. At least, he did until The Mandarin took that opportunity to transport "Iron Man" to his castle to kill him. Oops. Tony sneaked out of the hospital, cobbled together another suit, and saved his employee, just as *any* boss would do.

7. The Acrobat in "The Human Torch Meets... Captain America!" in *Strange Tales* #114 (Nov 63). Johnny (The Torch) Storm was excited when he learned Captain America would appear at the Glenville Antique Auto Show (don't ask). Cap hadn't been seen in years, making this a dramatic event. Wouldn't you know it? A bunch of crooks tried to swipe an antique car, so The Torch flamed on — and ran into Cap!

Cap dissed Johnny while catching the crooks, infuriating our flaming hero. Things got worse, when

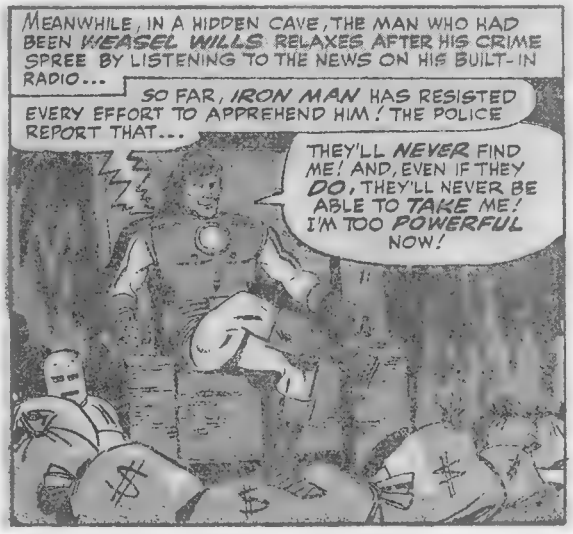
LISTEN, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU, ANYWAY? YOU USED TO BE... HEY!! DON'T!!
NOTHING HAPPENED TO ME, TORCH... EXCEPT THAT I WISED UP! AND NOW THESE HANDCUFFS SHOULD HOLD YOU TILL I'M GONE!
15.

The Human Torch met Captain America in *Strange Tales* #114, but things didn't go the way Johnny had hoped.

Cap helped criminals escape from jail and then used them as a decoy while he robbed a bank. Say what? Acrobatic mayhem ensued, but a really wet mop put Johnny out of action.

When he'd shaken *that* off and caught up to Cap, he discovered "Cap" was actually The Acrobat, an old foe impersonating the star-spangled guy. His red trunks should have been a giveaway, but it'd been a long time (and, to be fair, Johnny's comics showed the red trunks, too).

6. Weasel Wills in "When Titans Clash!" in *Tales of Suspense* #65 (May 65). Weasel was a low-level thief who got the brilliant idea of sneaking into Stark Industries to steal stuff. He not only found Tony Stark's briefcase, but Tony had also neglected to lock it! D'oh!


MEANWHILE, IN A HIDDEN CAVE, THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN WEASEL WILLS RELAXES AFTER HIS CRIME SPREE BY LISTENING TO THE NEWS ON HIS BUILT-IN RADIO...
SO FAR, IRON MAN HAS RESISTED EVERY EFFORT TO APPREHEND HIM! THE POLICE REPORT THAT...
THEY'LL NEVER FIND ME! AND, EVEN IF THEY DO, THEY'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE ME! I'M TOO POWERFUL NOW!

In *Tales of Suspense* #65, Weasel Wills learned it's good to be the Iron Man, at least until the real Iron deal finally realizes what's going on.

Weasel figured out how to operate the armor, and mayhem (not to mention bank-robbing) ensued. *Several days later,* while at the test site for his missiles, Tony finally spotted a front-page, banner headline noting that Iron Man's crime spree was continuing. Yikes. Apparently, none of The Avengers read the newspaper, either.

Tony ran home, hopped in his original cumbersome yellow suit, and went iron-*mano y mano* with Iron Weasel for many pages. Weasel put up a good fight, but you can probably figure out who won.

THIS COSTUME I DESIGNED HAS HUNDREDS OF JETS WHICH I CAN TURN ON AUTOMATICALLY, TO BURST INTO FLAMES!
HOWEVER, THE INSIDE OF THE SUIT IS LINED WITH ASBESTOS, SO I CANNOT BE BURNED!
AND WITH THIS MINIATURE ROCKET MOTOR, TO ENABLE ME TO FLY, I WILL BE ABLE TO IMITATE THE TORCH IN EVERY WAY!
SMALL HOLES IN SUIT ALLOW JET FIRE TO BURN FREE!
ROCKET MOTOR FOR LIFT AND SPEED!

The Wizard put his genius-level brain to work figuring out how to pretend to be The Human Torch in *Strange Tales* #102.

5. The Wizard in "Prisoner of the Wizard" in *Strange Tales* #102 (Nov 62). The Wiz was a rich, inventive genius who wowed crowds with his brain-power. But he was irritated by the fawning acclaim The Torch received, so he decided to change that.

He arranged a meeting and ambushed The Torch, then impersonated him using an asbestos-lined suit covered with flaming jets. He robbed banks and caused mayhem until the Torch freed himself. Confronting The Wizard, Johnny tricked him into losing a competition (with the help of his sis, The Invisible Girl). Distraught, Wiz surrendered, never knowing how he'd been beat.

4. The Fantastic Four in "A Blind Man Shall Lead Them" in *Fantastic Four* #39 (Jun 65). In this case, the heroes were actually impersonating themselves. They did it after they were caught in a nuclear explosion, which caused them to lose their powers. Let's not think about it.

Reed "Never Say Die" Richards decided to replicate their powers in case their enemies learned of their loss. Mimicking Johnny's powers was easy, since The Wizard had already figured out how to do it. Reed created a remote-controlled robot for Ben, an exoskeleton for Sue, and elongating arms and feet for himself.

But they didn't work very well. So Reed called his attorney to explain what to do, should they die. (It's called a will, Reed.) Fortunately, Reed's lawyer was Matt Murdock, aka Daredevil, who joined the fray as Doctor Doom attacked (not knowing the team had no powers).

That led into a classic two-parter, as DD helped The FF retake the Baxter Building and hold off Doom long enough to regain their powers. Then all bets were off.

3. The Red Skull in "Now Begins the Nightmare!" in *Captain America* #115 (Jul 69). Said nightmare involved The Skull using the power of The Cosmic Cube to switch bodies with The Star-Spangled Avenger. After putting him through some rather pedestrian mayhem, The Skull materialized Cap's sweetie, Sharon Carter, and switched bodies with Cap!

That left Cap next issue trying to convince Sharon that he (as The Skull) was really Cap, while The Skull (as Cap) canoodled with Ms. Carter. Cap had to run for his life, and even The Avengers didn't believe him. (His defense — "I'm not who I look like!" — was not especially persuasive.)

The Skull transported Cap (as The Skull) to a remote island where The Skull had earlier marooned a bunch of ne'er do wells (he knew a lot). They were pleased when The Skull (*i.e.*, Cap) arrived. Halfway through this third issue, Cap finally realized his chances of hiding might improve, if he *took off his Skull mask*. His chances improved more when he met Sam Wilson, aka The Falcon.

Two issues later, in #119, The Skull decided he was "bored" with this game and bizarrely retrieved Cap (and Falcon) and switched them back. Needless to say, that was the beginning of the end.

2. Doctor Doom in "The Living Prison!" in *Daredevil* #38 (Mar 68). Having apparently tried everything else he could think of, Doom trapped The Man without Fear and switched bodies so he could infiltrate The FF's HQ and kill them. He was a bit thrown to discover that his senses didn't work quite the way they should, but he didn't deduce exactly why that was.

Doctor Doom thought he was pretty slick when he switched bodies with DD in *Daredevil* #37, but it didn't take long for him to regret it.

The best aspect of this transferal came when Doom discovered that he hadn't considered all of the ramifications of putting Matt Murdock into Doom's body. First, Matt made Doom's henchmen release him from his prison. (Doom had neglected to tell the henchguys not to listen to "Doom" after "DD" left.) Then, he called The FF on their secret frequency (which Doom didn't know) to warn them.

Then — my favorite part — Matt called "his" Council of Ministers and, as head of Latveria, ordered them to

declare war on every surrounding nation! Doom (as DD) heard the announcement of this stunning order and knew Latveria was in deep doom-doom. He frantically found Matt and angrily switched their bodies back so he could cancel the order. What a hoot!

But it wasn't not over yet! Matt had been really convincing when he'd alerted The FF to the switch. So, in *Fantastic Four* #73 (Apr 68), he headed to The Baxter Building to give The FF a debriefing. As Daredevil. Who The FF now thought was Doom. Major mayhem ensued, especially after DD convinced Spider-Man to help him survive, and Spidey then convinced Thor of the same.

The battle raged until Sue convinced her teammates that DD was who he said, based on what she knew was going on and seeing Doom on TV trying to fix things.

The Final Four

Not every impersonation was a classic. At the barrel's bottom:

97. Matt Murdock in "If There Should Be a Thunder God" in *Daredevil* #30 (Jul 67). To lure Mr. Hyde and The Cobra out of hiding, The Man without Fear hilariously dressed up as Mike Murdock dressed up as Thor. The Thunder God spotted the impersonation. Thor smash.

98. Flash Thompson in "Marked for Destruction by Doctor Doom!" in *Amazing Spider-Man* #5 (Oct 63). Spidey's #1 fan dressed up as his hero to play a trick on Peter. *He* got tricked instead, when Doctor Doom was fooled and captured him.

99. Foggy Nelson in "There Shall Come a Gladiator" in *Daredevil* #18 (Jul 66). To persuade Karen Page that he was DD (long story), Foggy had a DD suit made at a costume shop. It required a little extra stretch across the stomach. He wound up battling the freaking Gladiator (for one punch).

100. The Blob and Unus in "I, Lucifer," in *X-Men* #20 (May 66). They dressed up as X-Men to rob a bank. It wasn't too convincing, since The Blob in spandex looks nothing like any X-Man, but citizens weren't that discerning. The X-ers' attempts to stop them were misconstrued, making things worse.

YA BLAMED NUISANCE! NOW LOOK WHAT YA'VE GONE AND DONE!
JUST LIKE ALWAYS-- IF YOU CAN'T LEAD A HEIST, YOU TRY TO FOUL IT UP!
I'M AFRAID WE'RE GONNA HAVETA PUNISH YOU FOR THIS--!

1. A Mad Scientist in "This Man, This Monster!" in *Fantastic Four* #51 (Jun 66). The previous entry could have taken the top spot, with its creative plot and all-out action through two titles. But it's hard to deny this slot to what many readers consider to be one of the best FF tales of all time.

Ben was wandering on a rainy night, having a self-pity party, when a kindly stranger asked him in. Sadly, the stranger was the aforementioned Mad Scientist, who drugged The Thing and then used his home transferal ray to transfer the "Thing" atoms to him. So the guy became The Thing and Ben became Just Plain Ben. The scientist noted that Ben shouldn't have a problem with that, and it's hard to argue.

LOOK, I DUNNO WHO THIS NUT IS, BUT IF HE DON'T STOP BREATHIN' IN MY FACE--!
HE KNOWS WHO I AM, ALL RIGHT! HE--HE DUPLICATED ME, SOMEHOW! HE TURNED INTO THE THING--AND I TURNED BACK TO BEN GRIMM! WE GOTTA MAKE 'IM ADMIT IT!
NOW HOLD ON, MISTER! THE THING ISN'T EXACTLY AN EASY MAN TO IMITATE!
HE'S NOT IMITATING ME--HE IS ME! I MEAN--!

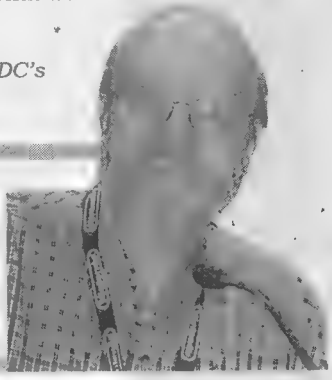
But he did. So, while "The Thing" was chatting with Reed and Sue at The Baxter Building, Ben arrived to convince his pals that they were being played. Bizarrely, Reed brushed off Ben's story and turned him away. Wouldn't a quick game of "What Did We Have for Dinner" have ended this charade? Let's not linger to consider Reed's genius.

So it was that the scientist saw the hard, unpublicized work that Reed did for no profit. He was shocked, having thought that super-heroing was all about the glamour. So, when Reed ended up in deadly danger, the scientist realized what being a hero was really about. He ultimately sacrificed himself to save Reed, grateful for the chance to atone for all the rotten things he'd done.

When he died, Ben reverted to his Thing body, and Reed and Sue were astonished to discover that they hadn't lost their friend. It was a powerful, personal story contrasting mightily with the previous cosmic Galactus/Silver Surfer epic. It also showed that, as Kurt Vonnegut said, "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." ❑

As with most mind-switching victims, Ben Grimm took an unimaginative approach to convincing Reed he was the real deal in *Fantastic Four* #51.

Did I leave out your favorite? Want to see DC's Top 10? Write to let us know!



Known to fans worldwide as "Mr. Silver Age," **CRAIG SHUTT** has waxed nostalgic about comics of old in **CBG** since 1992. Send comments and suggestions to **craigshutt@ameritech.net**.

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An economic gyp?

All 64 (or 56, 48, 40, 32) pages in color for a dime

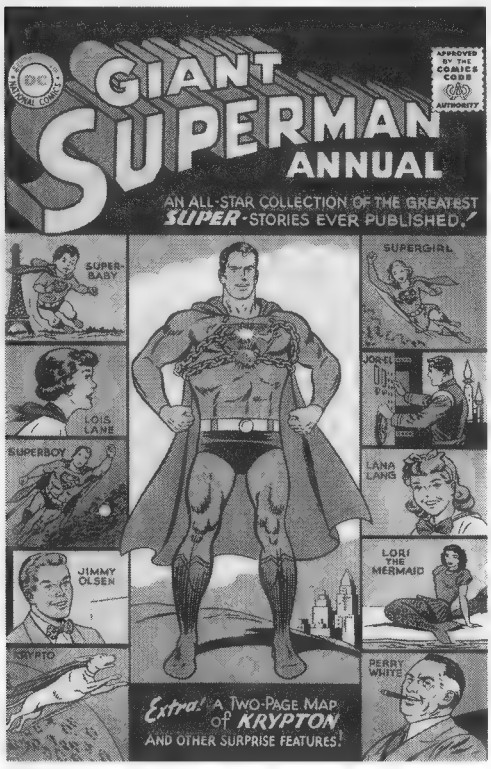
by **MICHELLE NOLAN**

Many collectors love to tell stories of when they first encountered DC's earliest Silver Age quarter comics during the 1960s. Kids instinctively knew they were getting a great deal.

When I began voraciously pillaging second-hand book stores for old comics in 1956 at age 8, I soon came to realize that the comics I was buying off the racks were something of an economic gyp.

I can't remember the name of the first 52-pager (as those comics came to be known: 52 pages counting the covers) I found, but I think it was either a *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* or a *Looney Tunes & Merrie Melodies* with Dell's cover blurb "52 Pages — All Comics!" Or maybe it was a DC with the classic cover box reading "A 52-Page Magazine."

"Hmmmmm," I'm pretty sure I must have remarked, since I had the genes for bargain hunting and frugality that have long since earned me the nickname Princess Penurious, "why are the comics I'm buying *today* only *36* pages including covers? That doesn't seem fair."



My loving parents, solid Eisenhower Republican businesspeople that they were, most likely said something like, "That's just the way it is. Life isn't always fair, even in the comic books. The publisher just wants to spend less to make more."

The average kid would get it over it. I never did. Instead, I set about trying to figure it all out.

Now, be honest. Whether or not you have ever tried to figure out this economic stuff: If you like Golden Age comics, don't you prefer getting a 52-pager (or more) to getting a 36-pager?

While I was forever duly noting the dates and identities of companies that published "big" comics — and being totally baffled why DC for a few years in the early 1950s published both 44-page and 36-page comics after the demise of the 52-pagers — I came across *Superman Annual* #1 in 1960.

This oversized gem — the first DC quarter comic book (other than the 1953 3-D Batman and Superman issues) since the 1944 *Big All-American* —— was also the first DC issue to thoroughly reprint and document a bit of history. In this case, it was not only stories, but also accurate cover images of the first issues of *Superman, Superboy, Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen,* and *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane.*

I had never known what *Superman* #1 (Spr 39) looked like. I had yet to see the artistically rendered images of #25, #50, #75, and #100 portrayed on *Superman* #100. On the back cover of that wonderful *Superman Annual* #1, I was captivated by the image of *Superman* #1, which might as well have been published on Earth-2 for all the opportunity I would ever have to hold one! But wait — why would DC advertise "Pages of Action" on the cover of *Superman* #1? What sense did that make?

It made a *lot* of sense, if you were a DC executive and you ordered a cover touch because you didn't want readers to see the full blurb as presented 21 years earlier: "64 Pages of Action." After all, what's the point of producing an 80-page (not counting covers) *Superman Annual* for a quarter, if you're going to tell readers that 10¢ comics once contained 64 pages (not counting covers).

But — aha! — I figured it out! The clue: I had a coverless *King Comics* from 1940 with 64 pages! It took a few years, but my suspicions were confirmed when I first ogled a genuine copy of *Superman* #1: "64 Pages of Action." It was proof that DC had been sensitive to the economics of the situation. Not only that, but DC had also taken off the "52-page" blurb on *Superboy* #1 when that cover image was reprinted.

Fast forward about five decades, and I have long finished collecting data and info on when and why most comics changed their page counts, thanks to the fabulous indexing work of the late Howard Keltner and Jerry Bails. At various points in the 1960s, when standard-sized comics had become 12¢ but still remained at 36 pages of content, I came to realize that there had been no consistency to page counts until the mid-1950s.

Well, there was *some* consistency. Almost all newsstand comic books were 68 pages (counting covers) until various points in 1943 (which ultimately

became a huge part of their appeal to the first serious Golden Age collectors in the 1960s). World War II paper restrictions, along with manpower shortages (plus perhaps a desire to maximize profits), led almost all publishers to drop page counts to anywhere from 60 pages to 36 pages (counting covers) during the last two years of the war.

I've always wondered if comic-book readers cared much about this page-count business. Or even if they wondered about it. Pulp magazines also varied widely in page counts before, during, and after the war, but they also varied in price. For all I know, so did the slick magazines.

I *do* know most collectors cared about page counts in the 1960s and many of them still do — although quality matters, too. After all, the E.C. Comics of the 1950-1955 period were 36-pagers.

I started thinking about all this when comics historian Dan Stevenson recently found a copy of *Blazing West* #19 (Sep-Oct 51), a 36-page issue from the American Comics Group. Aside from the fact that this may be the only comic book ever published with a bear, a dog, a girl, *and* a masked hero astride a horse on the cover, there was something else that caught my eye.

The banner strip across the top — all ACG comics carried a banner strip — was blank! I had never seen a blank banner across an ACG comic book. At this point in the tiny company's history, the banners on most of their titles said "Giant 52-Page Size! Buy No Less!" In fact, those words carried into 1952 on the ACG titles that still had 52 pages.

So, at the same time legendary ACG editor Richard Hughes was cautioning his readers to "buy no less!" than 52 pages, he began publishing *Blazing West* with 36 pages. The mind boggles! By the buy (pardon the pun!), *Blazing West* #17 (May-June 51) had the "Buy No Less!" banner. (#18 is the only issue I'm missing.)

There was a degree of consistency to the way most publishers shrunk their comics in the 1940s and 1950s. For example, Dell and Archie retained the 52-page size for their best-selling titles until points in 1954, but both companies had long since reduced to 36 pages titles they perceived as lesser. One would think they might have done the opposite, but apparently they worried that their best-sellers might slip in circulation if they were downsized.

Likewise, DC abandoned the 52-page format with comics dated in the autumn months of 1951 — except for *Superman* and *Batman*, which retained the 52-page format for another year. (Two decades later, DC returned to the 52-page size for a bit more than a year.) Such bestsellers as *Action*, *Adventure*, and *Detective* were cut only to 44 pages until about midway through 1954, while many others in the DC stable were immediately reduced to 36 pages.

I still can't help wondering what had been the bigger shock: paying a dime for 52 pages one month in 1951, then for only 36 pages the next month — or plunking down a dime one month and 12¢ the next month a decade later.

As far as I know, Quality Comics reduced all its titles to 36 pages early in 1949, and so they remained until the company canceled or suspended 22 of its 30 titles (including all 14 of its romance titles) late in 1950. The eight titles that were not canceled — most notably *Blackhawk*, *Plastic Man*, *Police Comics*, and *Doll Man* — all briefly became 52 pages once again starting late in 1950. *Blackhawk*, by far Quality's most successful title of the era, remained 52 pages for 12 full issues, from #33 (Oct 50) through #44 (Sep 52). By 1952, Quality once again had a full line of comics, but only *Blackhawk* was a 52-pager.

Fiction House briefly published 36-page issues during the paper-restricted years of 1945-46, then returned to 52 pages for several years. But beginning in 1949, following the appearance of *Planet Comics* #61 (Jul 49, the last 52-page issue of *Planet*), the firm gradually reduced all of its titles to 36 pages — a few in 1949, a few in 1950, and a few in 1951. The fabled firm's two best-selling titles — the monthly *Jumbo Comics* featuring Sheena Queen of the Jungle and *Jungle Comics* featuring Tarzan knockoff K'a'anga — each remained 52 pages through the July 1951 issues, with *Jumbo* #149 and *Jungle* #139.

In contrast, Fawcett was all over the map, publishing either 36-pagers or 52-pagers in the late 1940s and early 1950s for most of its titles, until dropping to 36 pages for good with issues dated in mid-1951. Likewise, Timely issues also varied in size during the same period. In contrast, Lev Gleason (with the popular *Crime Does Not Pay*, *Daredevil*, *Boy Comics*, and *Black Diamond* plus others) finally ended its long-running 52-page consistency at just about the same time as DC.

In other words, there was pretty much utter chaos — from the standpoint of page counts — for a full decade until 1954, when the major publishers released the last of the 52-pagers and 44-pagers. Comic-book publishers generally figured that a "generation" of devoted readers was about six or seven years, so by 1960 they thought that the only DC readers who remembered 52-pagers or more were in high school or college. The only younger readers who knew about those hallowed bargains were budding historians and data nuts — like me.

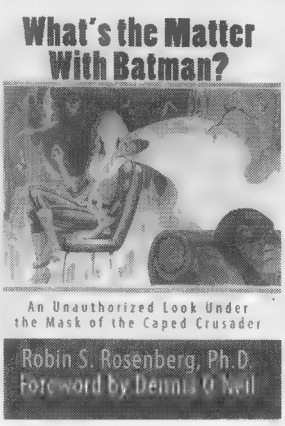
So now you know why the cover reprint of *Superman* #1 did not tell you there were 64 pages of action. But you have to admit — it was pretty neat to buy a giant DC comic book for a quarter, right?

The cover of *Superman* #1, shown on *Superman Annual* #1's back cover, had some carefully excised text.

How obsessed is *too* obsessed?

Psychoanalyzing Batman

by ANDREW "CAPTAIN COMICS" SMITH


What's the Matter With Batman?
An Unauthorized Look Under the Mask of the Caped Crusader
Robin S. Rosenberg, Ph.D.
Foreword by Dennis O'Neil

If you've ever wondered whether Batman was certifiable in any way, you're in luck: A clinical psychologist has written a book that addresses that very question.

What's the Matter with Batman? An Unauthorized Look under the Mask of The Caped Crusader is by Robin S. Rosenberg, Ph.D., a psychotherapist, textbook and book author, lecturer, and certified hypnotist. (No, I am not making that last one up.) She is also series editor of the "Superheroes" line at Oxford University Press and editor of the anthologies *The Psychology of Superheroes* and *The Psychology of the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* — and is a major Bat-fan.

The book examines whether Batman could be diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, clinical depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder or antisocial personality disorder. Rosenberg also addresses Batman's guilt and anger issues, workaholism, and occasional poor judgment (such as adopting teen boys to fight crime).

Obviously, I'm not going to spoil the book by revealing Rosenberg's diagnoses and/or conclusions. But the interview ranged over a number of Bat-topics, and what she had to say was fascinating without (I hope) too many spoilers. Here we go:

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Captain Comics: ***There have been a lot of different takes on Batman in his 73 years, and you reference stories throughout the character's print, TV, and films appearances. Are you analyzing a sort of amalgam Batman — or focusing on elements that are found in the current version?***

Robin Rosenberg: I focus on an amalgam. Basically, what I was trying to do was find, in any version, enough symptoms of various disorders. Did any version have a disorder? Of course, I haven't read every Batman story, not even close, but there are stories that I think make it clear that he does have enough symptoms. That's why I invite people to let me know about stories that they think show that he *does* have a given disorder. Then, I'll revise and make a second edition, if that's true. So it's a collaborative effort.

CC: ***One point you make is that some of Batman's behavior can be seen as an exaggeration of what is otherwise familiar behavior — workaholism or wearing a different "mask" in different situations. He just takes it to a troubling extreme.***

Rosenberg: Exactly. And I think that's part of the appeal of the character — or characters in general — is that people *do* identify with these different aspects that are just exaggerations of what we do all the time. Even with alter egos, the secret identities, we all are different people in different contexts, if you want to frame it as that. Who we are with our boss is different from who we are with our parents or who we are with our intimate partner. And different contexts allow different aspects of ourselves to come to the fore.

So for Batman, he may do what seem like weird things — including wearing a costume or spending a lot of money on his hobby. But we do the same things. We put on a costume when we put on a suit or whatever on Friday night; we spend money on our hobbies (some of us more than we should, perhaps). And most of us try to do good in some way and so, like Batman, we try to be social activists. He is exactly what you said: He's an exaggeration of us.

> Even with alter egos, the secret identities, we all are different people in different contexts.

Photo ™ and © DC Comics.

CC: ***Speaking of masks, a popular debate fans have is to argue about who the "real" person is in a super-hero series. That is to say, many agree that, whether or not he's wearing a suit, Superman is always Clark Kent — that Clark is the real person, but Superman is an act. On page 26, though, I get the idea that you feel that Batman's core personality is neither Batman nor Bruce Wayne — that both of those personae are masks of a sort. Is that what you were saying?***

Rosenberg: Going back to what I said earlier, I think all of us have different alter egos. We're a combination of different personality traits that come to the fore or recede depending on a goal, on the context — kind of "the pack that we are with." Just as we are at heart one person, we can be different people with our parents or our intimate partner. We can feel like we're different people in different contexts because we behave differently. As adults with our parents, we tend to still feel like kids; around kids, we feel like an adult. I think he's one person who has different facets in the same way we do.

Having said that, I think the process of *literally* wearing a mask has interesting effects. There has been psychological research on wearing masks. ... When people wear masks, they tend to feel less like themselves; they tend to take more risks. They feel more anonymous, so they might behave differently from ... when they're fully seen and recognized without a mask.

So, for Batman and Spider-Man and other super-heroes who wear a mask: They do this interesting thing in which they really *do* feel less like themselves. I've interviewed cosplayers — costume players at comics conventions — and talked to them about how it feels when they wear costumes that have a mask, versus ones that don't. They reported a similar experience, in which they feel much more embodied in the character when they're wearing a mask so that people can't identify them as themselves. They really *become* someone else socially, because no one knows who they are behind the mask.

I think, again, it's part of the interesting thing where there are psychological underpinnings to super-hero stories. So, when Batman wears a mask, there is a sense in which he becomes someone else simply by virtue of wearing a mask and becoming anonymous.

CC: ***It's kind of liberating.***

Rosenberg: Exactly. People describe it that way. Liberating, and you can guess that means that Batman has to work a little harder about restraining himself, because, when people wear a mask, they describe feeling less inhibited. So a powerful Batman who is uninhibited — he would kill people. But *because* he has so much self-knowledge and is so good at regulating himself in general, he'd be positive to work extra hard when he wears the mask. To make sure he didn't hurt people — to make sure he didn't hurt them mortally.

CC: ***That raises a question about the Christopher Nolan Batman trilogy. In the first movie, the idea is suggested that the bat mask is a sort of totem — that with it Bruce draws on the animal's spirit, strength, and guidance, as many primitive societies believe. What's your professional take on the mask as something other than a scary disguise?***

Rosenberg: I think partly it depends on the wearer. ... So, if he chose the bat, it's not simply a mask that he's putting on; it's a *meaningful* mask. It may be when he puts it on there is a totemic-like aspect wishing to imbue himself with certain bat-like characteristics. If he were wearing a princess mask, he might feel a little different!

If I ever had the opportunity to interview Christian Bale or Michael Keaton or any of the other Batman actors, I would be curious to hear about their experience in wearing the mask — again for the reasons we just discussed, about the psychological effects of wearing a mask, of being hidden. I wouldn't rule out a totem connection.

CC: ***In the July issue of* Entertainment Weekly, *Christian Bale says he plays Bruce Wayne as three people: "The public, vacuous billionaire. The private Bruce Wayne who is a child. And then the vengeful one who is a monster." The monster, of course, is Batman. How does this play into your Bruce Wayne theories?***

Rosenberg: I think for actors, it makes sense that they need to think about the different alter egos of different roles. I think in our own lives, we don't consciously assume a different role when we're with our parents or with our children. We do it because the context of the situation, the cues in the environment, pulls it out of us. When we notice, when we're in the hallway with our parents [and] we feel like a child, we wish it weren't so. But the power of the situation pulls it out of us.

For actors, it has to be more consciously put on, because they don't have a history with those same cues. So it makes sense to me that Christian Bale would describe them as different roles. But it's not all that different from what we do. And, in fact, underneath all of those roles is still Christian Bale the actor, who, in his different roles, allows different parts of himself to come out. So Christian Bale, too,

For actors, it makes sense that they need to think about the different alter egos of different roles.

Photo ™ and © DC Comics.

has his own alter egos.

And my understanding from actors that I've talked to is that part of acting is letting different parts of yourself come to the fore in a role. So that's also (sort of at a meta level) part of what he's doing when he assumes the three roles: letting different aspects of himself out in those roles. Which is why some actors may have too hard a time playing certain roles, because it's so far from who they are. It's harder to act a part that resonates with a role that's really different.

On the other hand, some actors provide amazing performances of a character who is so clearly different from themselves, because somehow they just access the elements needed to make that character work. But that's a whole other digression. But that part must have been rattling around somewhere inside them, because so much of it is coming to the fore.

CC: ***Nolan seemed to channel some of that when he picked Bale. In that same* Entertainment Weekly*, he said, "Bruce Wayne is such an extreme character. You needed someone who could project that quality. Christian Bale had that fire."***

Rosenberg: Exactly. The psychology of this is fascinating. I've been certified in hypnosis and I was involved in a research study looking at actors to see how hypnotizable they were. They were actually, I think, students — but the idea is that actors can disassociate well, that they can go somewhere else in their heads, which most of them must do, in order to embody a role. Especially in theater, you at least have continuity in the moment, from scene to scene and act to act. But in film and television, where you perform scenes out of order and you're doing a scene an hour later in the film, you have to get yourself into that place really well.

*(**Editor's note:** The Captain's interview with Dr. Rosenberg continues next month.)*

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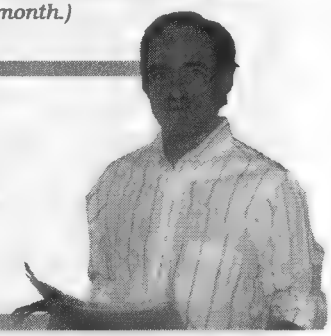

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Summer sales and some relaxing time

Fun summer comics reading

by **TONY ISABELLA**

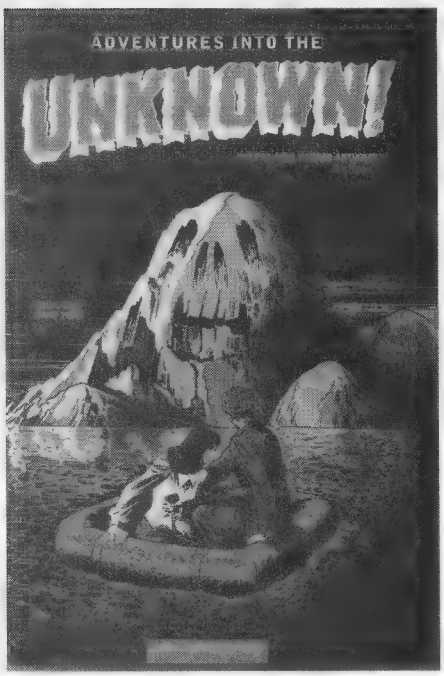
It's a sure sign of summer if the chair gets up when you do.

— *Walter Winchell* (1897-1972)

How's your summer going? I'm writing this in early July, and my own summer has been a whirlwind of family events, including my son Ed's graduation from The Ohio State University and his landing a job as an engineer two days later. There have been household projects, as well — among them, setting up my garage for my summer-long Garage Con. That will involve public garage sales every other weekend and private shopping for comics fans and retailers by appointment. My enthusiasm for this is tempered only by my realization that these sales represent the merest tip of the iceberg that is my legendary Vast Accumulation of Stuff.

My friends who are more active in the comics industry are zipping around the country from convention to convention. I get exhausted merely thinking about their schedules while simultaneously envying their adventures and stamina. Perhaps 2013 will find me on the con trail with them. Perhaps not.

My summer vacation plans are modest. I'd like to spend a few days in a secluded cabin somewhere with just enough modern amenities to keep me from starving to death while I kick back with a large stack of novels, graphic and otherwise. Of course, being alone in some secluded cabin flies in the face of everything I've learned from a lifetime of watching monster movies. Did you hear that?



Even while juggling personal and professional responsibilities, I have still managed to read a whole bunch of comics collections and graphic novels. Cue the reviews.

When Dark Horse announced its ***Adventures into the Unknown Archives* Vol. 1** ($49.99), I reacted to the news with puzzlement. A UK publisher had already released such a volume, and its first volume had had the first five issues of the 1950s pre-Code horror comic to the Dark Horse version's four. Given that the two competing books were priced about the same, I figured Dark Horse had already lost this battle of the archive editions. I figured wrong.

"SUDDENLY -- IT HAPPENED! OUT OF THE GREAT UNKNOWN CAME OLD PLACES, OLD THINGS -- AND I SEEMED TO REMEMBER THEM!"
MY HEAD'S -- IN A WHIRL! IT'S AS IF -- I WASN'T ME!

Dark Horse's version offers vastly superior reproduction. Each and every page is easy to read and vibrant. Details I'd missed in the UK book were clearly visible in the Dark Horse edition. That more than made up for including one less issue.

The stories themselves, originally published in the late 1940s, are sometimes pretty good and sometimes not. At the very least, each is interesting and offers a window to the comics world of that decade.

There are werewolves, ghosts, vampires, and other classic creatures of folklore. Though the editorial voice often declares there is no such thing as the supernatural, the sincerity of the storytelling begs to differ.

On the downside, save for a credit roll on the volume's title page, this edition doesn't credit the writers and artists of these tales, even though some of those credits can be found at the Grand Comics Database. Noted fantasy author Frank Belknap Long wrote all of the stories in the first issue, and artists whose work appeared in the issues reprinted herein include Fred Guardineer, Paul Reinman, Al Feldstein, Leonard Starr, Edvard Moritz, Jon Blummer, Pete Riss, and Max Elkan. To the best of current knowledge, archives editions like this one must strive to identify those who created the stories they contain. It's the right thing to do.

I'm not ready to call a winner in this Archives

competition until I see a second volume from each publisher. But, if you only have access to the Dark Horse version, don't hesitate to give it a shot.

It's a darn fine book.

www.darkhorse.com
ISBN: 978-1-59582-930-6

***Showcase Presents Young Love* Vol. 1** (DC, $19.99) reprints issues #39-#56 of the title from 1963-1966. It's a welcome addition to my personal comics library, but I can't recommend it wholeheartedly.

With the exception of those stories written by Robert Kanigher, the writing is uniformly bland. Kanigher, teamed with John Romita in his post-Atlas, pre-Marvel days, delivers actual drama and passion in the ongoing "Private Diary of Mary Robin, R.N." series. These are tales of tears and triumphs, duty and denial. Mary is a great character, dedicated to nursing but longing for true love, as well.

Romita did a sensational job illustrating these stories; his art is much more exciting than anything else in this 541-page collection.

There is some repetition over the course of the 14 episodes of the series, but its quality is consistently high.

Romita is the star of this volume's artistic line-up. None of the other artists even come close to his work. But don't rely on the book's credits to identify those artists for you. The errors are numerous and, in several cases, ridiculous. For accurate credits, hit the Grand Comics Database (*www.comics.org*), whose members have been discussing and correcting the credits, sometimes using actual editorial records of the era, as fast as they can.

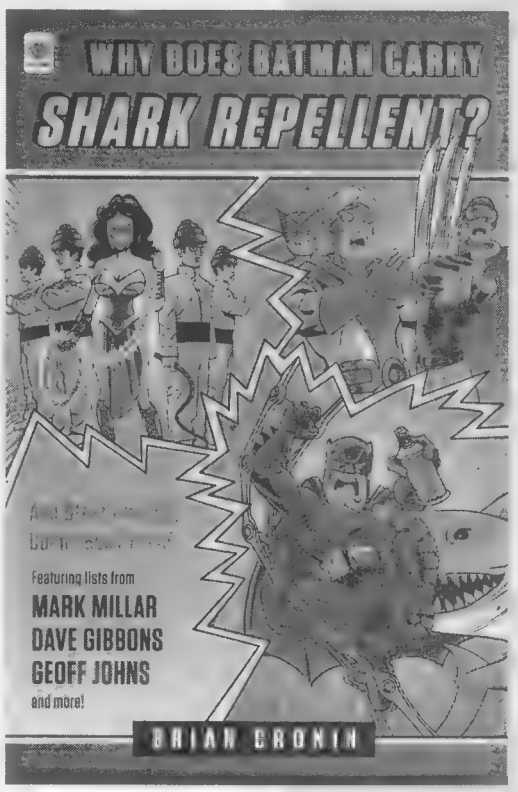
I do recommend *Showcase Presents Young Love* Vol. 1 to devotees of comics and comics history, but it's a guarded recommendation. I'd also recommend that DC show more care in producing these volumes, especially when it comes to identifying the DC writers and artists who created the stories therein.

www.dccomics.com
ISBN: 978-1-4012-3438-6

Lovingly, brilliantly crafted by P. Craig Russell, ***The Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde* Vol. 5: *The Happy Prince*** (NBM, $16.99) is arguably the most beautiful graphic album of 2012. It is a simultaneously heartbreaking and heart-lifting story of the friendship between the statue/spirit of a beloved prince who died too soon and the humble barn swallow who tries to help the lad alleviate the sufferings of his most destitute subjects. It's a glorious parable for our own troubled world with its vast divide between the rich and the poor.

My regard for this wonderful book comes from deep within my soul, and I recommend it without hesitation or restraint.

www.nbmpublishing.com
ISBN: 978-1-56163-626-6



Comics blogger Brian Cronin returns to better bookstores and comics shops everywhere to ask the burning question ***Why Does Batman Carry Shark Repellent?*** (Plume, $15). If you read and enjoyed his first book — *Was Superman a Spy?* — you'll love this kind of sequel just as much. It's filled with commentary, lists, and just plain goofy facts on such topics as weird members of The Green Lantern Corps, super-hero pets, commie villains, super-heroes who have been stabbed by Wolverine, death threats to comic-book creators, Professor X's most significant lies, strange comic-book ads, inventions crossing from comic books into real life, and much more, including the answer to the book's titular question. It's a great book to keep at hand for when you

have five or 10 minutes to spare and need to get your smile on for whatever you have to do next. Buy a copy for yourself and a few more to use as birthday/holiday gifts for your comics-reading friends. Share the mirth.

www.cbr.cc
ISBN: 978-0-452-29784-5

If you're feeling as if you'd like some old-time comedy fun, check out ***The Best of the Three Stooges Comicbooks* Vol. 1** (Papercutz, $19.99), even if whoever titled the book doesn't realize "comic books" isn't one word. This handsome hardcover presents nearly 200 pages of classic Stooges comics from the 1950s in full color.

THIS PLACE IS A GOLD-MINE! I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH THRIVING BUSINESS. COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT THOSE THREE GOONS ARE AS DUMB AS THEY LOOK?
HEH, HEH! I COULD TRY PULLING THE OLD "CHANGE FOR A FIVER" STUNT ON THEM! IF THEY FALL FOR THAT ONE, I'LL OWN THIS PLACE WITHIN THE HOUR!
MY GOOD MAN; WOULD YOU PLEASE GIVE ME CHANGE? SAY, TWO TENS FOR A FIVE?
TWO TENS FOR A FIVE? SURE, MISTER! ANY-TIME!!

From the early part of that decade, we get 10 stories written and drawn by Norman Maurer. These are witty misadventures wherein The Stooges (Moe, Larry, and Shemp) commit wonderful Stooge mayhem. In several of these tales, their nemesis is Benjamin Bogus, a con man who always thinks the boys will be an easy mark because, well, they are, but who still manages to come out on the losing side. It's as if the trio were a force of good — or maybe that should be a farce of good. Either way, I got a kick out of Maurer's story and art.

I'd recommend the book just for that.

The volume also presents several stories from the later 1950s, when Dell was publishing the *Three Stooges* comic books. Shemp is out, Curly Joe's in, and the great Pete Alvarado is drawing a more animated version of the trio. Though these stories aren't as sharp as those by Maurer, they're still entertaining. This volume would make a great gift for fans of the Stooges or humorous comic books in general.

www.papercutz.com
ISBN: 978-1-59707-328-8

A portly werewolf, a demon trapped in a little girl's body, and a pizza delivery boy walk into a bar — and that's just one of several scenes in ***The Incredible Adventures of Dog Mendonca and Pizzaboy*** (Dark Horse, $12.99) that made me smile and, occasionally, laugh out loud. Written by Flippe Melo and drawn by Juan Cavia, this full-color graphic novel is an occult adventure comedy with gargoyles, vampires, Nazis, and other monsters. It's not an award-winner, but it *is* great fun — and, as such, perfect for summer reading.

www.darkhorse.com
ISBN: 978-1-59582-938-2

School may be out for the summer, but ***Jinx: Little Jinx Grows Up*** by J. Torres, Rick Burchett, and Terry Austin (Archie, $16.99) also makes for fun summer reading. Cute "Li'l Jinx" from all those charming Joe Edwards stories and gag pages is starting high school. It's a new world for the now-teen and her friends, a world where nothing is as simple as when they were younger.

Torres and company temper the teen angst with humor. Their cast of characters rings true, though these youngsters aren't as dramatic as the kids I watched grow into adults in my Medina, Ohio, neighborhood. That makes for comfortable "all ages" entertainment, though part of me wishes Torres has explored some of the concerns and problems I saw my kids and their friends face in high school. That's just me, I guess, always wanting to see comics envelopes pushed, especially when such stories include comedy and character growth.

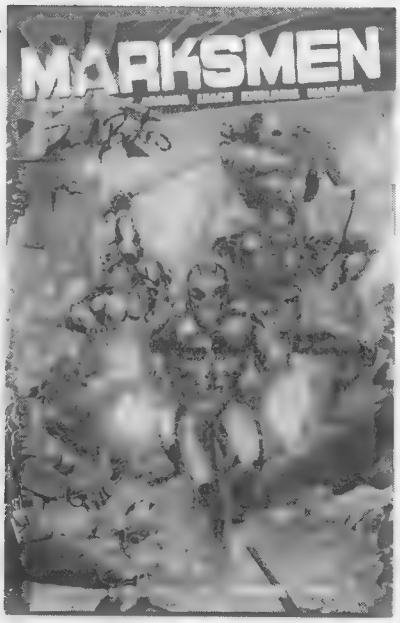
Still, that's a book I want to see, not the book I'm reviewing. The book I'm reviewing is a fine effort on all counts, and I think my ***CBG*** readers will enjoy it.

www.archiecomics.com
ISBN: 978-1-936975-00-6

I'm not a fan of post-Apocalyptic science-fiction. I'm all about hope for the future and personal jet packs and sassy robot maids.

That said, ***Marksmen* Vol. 1** (Image, $15.99) with too many names in the credits was more entertaining than I had anticipated. In this particular post-catastrophe America, the warring factions are true believers, one side putting its faith in science and the other in its charismatic leader. It's blind science versus blind faith, and, while I'm on the side of the scientists — that hypocritical leader of the other side is more than willing to use science to get what he wants — there is no shortage of flawed humans on either side of this conflict. There are heroes, villains, and individuals sort of caught between those choices. I liked the graphic novel enough to look forward to what comes next.

As for those ponderous credits — I hate the Hollywood mentality of too many modern comics —



Marksmen was "created by Michael Benarova, David Baxter, and Dave Elliott." The story's by Baxter and Elliott. The script is by Baxter. The pencil art is by Javier Aranda with finishes by Garry Leach. While all those cooks don't hurt this story too much, it's been death on too many occasions to change my preference for one writer and one artist in the comic books I read. Or one talented creator who does both well.

Marksmen color is by Jessica Kholinne and Benny Maulana. Lettering is by Bebe Giraffe. Catering services were provided by — OK, now I'm just being ornery. *Marksmen* is worth a look.

www.imagecomics.com

ISBN: 978-1-60706-486-2

OK, now that you've run to your friendly neighborhood comics shop and purchased all the fine items I've reviewed this month, you're ready to kick back in your comfy chair with your favorite beverage and lose yourself in great reading. But hold on! How are you going to *open* that beverage?

If you're me, you reach for *The Mighty Thor Bottle Opener* (Diamond Select, $19.99), which I bought for myself as a Christmas gift last year. It's five inches of beverage-opening power made in China, which must be a suburb of Asgard.

It is not a bottle opener for ordinary human beings. Indeed, cut into its metal head are the words *Whosoever holds this hammer, if he be worthy, shall possess the power of Thor.*

Well, since I'm both worthy *and* thirsty, I'm gonna open a cold root beer and start reading the comics goodies I'll be reviewing in *next* month's ***CBG***. Have a happy and safe summer, my friends, and we'll meet up again in a month or so.

TONY ISABELLA, comics writer and author, has been appearing in ***CBG*** since #3 in 1971. Comments on this column and review items for future columns can be sent to: Tony's Tips, 840 Damon Drive, Medina, OH 44256.
You can e-mail Tony at ***tonyisa@ohio.net***.

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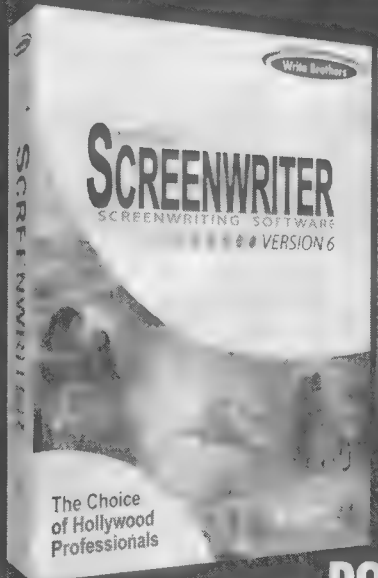

"Terrific, well-thought-out software that takes the noxious formatting hassles out of the writing process and allows creators to concentrate on their words and ideas. I recommend it to all my students, freelancers, and fellow writers."

Mark Waid
Instructor, editor, and writer
Of over 50 graphic novels including Kingdom Come

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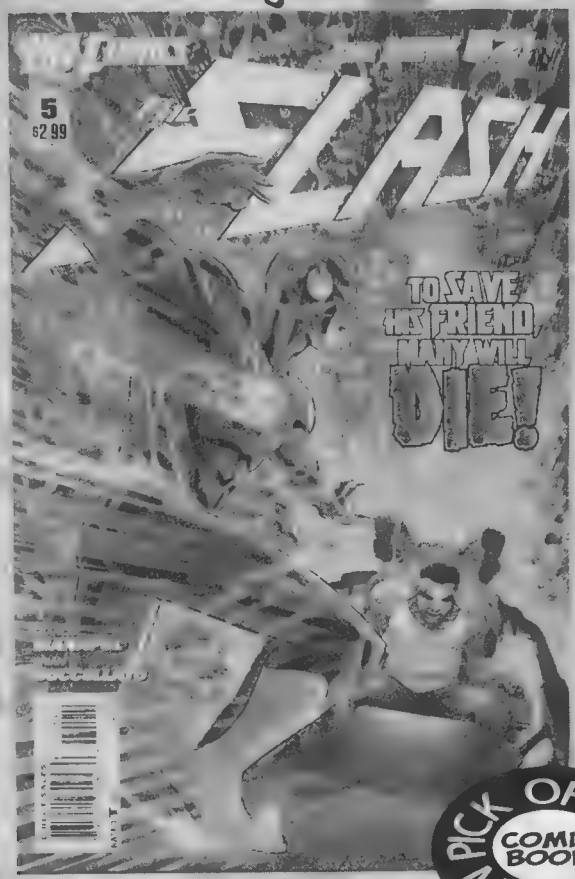
NAVIGATING THE MAINSTREAM

PICKS AND PANS FROM DARK HORSE, DC, IDW, IMAGE, AND MARVEL

REVIEWS



PICK OF THE MONTH
COMIC BOOK

Fury Max #1

★★★

Marvel/Max

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.

Writer: Garth Ennis

Artist: Goran Parlov

After years of writing *Punisher Max* stories, Garth Ennis turns his attention to Marvel's top spy agent and his "untold" war tales throughout the past few decades.

Nick Fury is best known either for his days with The Howling Commandos in World War II or his later years as the head of S.H.I.E.L.D. However, during his long lifetime, he has served his country in many other conflicts, including Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua. This first issue starts with his experiences in French Indochina during the 1950s.

Appropriately subtitled "My War Gone By," the story starts with Fury narrating his adventures into an old-style tape recorder with the words, "These are the things I've done for my country."

Readers who found Ennis' previous *Fury Max* series from 2001 to be too over-the-top may find this more to their liking. For those who miss the classic team of Ennis and Parlov on *Punisher Max*, this will help to fill that gap. As with all Marvel's Max titles, this series is not intended for younger readers.

— Christopher Galvan

www.marvel.com

The Flash #5-7

★★★★

DC

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.

Writers and artists: Frances Manapul, Brian Buccellato

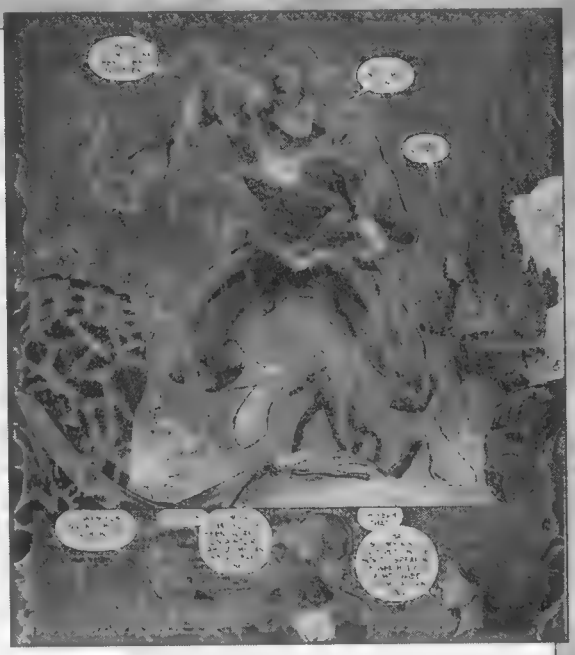
One life vs. many: It's an equation heroes usually don't have to think about, but, when it's personal and morality is involved, it's not so easy. So it is that Flash must choose between saving his friend Manuel or the CIA man's crooked clones, the collective villain named Mob Rule. And, once the dust settles on that situation, our hero finds he has a far bigger problem to contend with.

A typically busy issue of this DC "New 52" relaunch also finds Iris West facing the angry inmates of Iron Heights, Patty Spivot standing her ground against rowdy Central City residents, and The Flash discovering a new benefit to his Speed Force connection.

Frances Manapul and Brian Buccellato fill the pages with dazzling images to complement their script, which is as good as anything in super-hero comics today. Manapul experiments with page design to reflect The Flash's fleetness, while Buccellato uses color, not just for mood, but to bring out key plot points. Getting better by the issue, *The Flash* deserves to be a runaway hit.

— Martin Gray

www.dccomics.com



Danger Girl/G.I. Joe #1

★★★

IDW

$3.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Andy Hartnell
Artist: John Royle

G.I. Joe and J. Scott Campbell and Andy Hartnell's *Danger Girl* are a natural fit.

They go together like chocolate and peanut butter, peas and carrots — you get the point.

Flint and Scarlett's plane is shot down, and the pair is declared MIA. However, politics come into play, tying G.I. Joe's hands.

Not willing to wait for General Hawk to cut through the red tape, Lady Jaye (Flint's girlfriend) and Cover Girl take matters into their own hands. Cover Girl calls "international bad ass" Johnny Barracuda for help, and they embark on their off-the-books mission to save their friends.

So far, the story is off to a good start, beginning strong and ending on a cliffhanger involving Abbey Chase, the main *Danger Girl* protagonist.

It would be nice if Campbell drew some interiors, not just covers; that said, John Royle holds his own on the interior art.

This will be a good mini-series.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.idwpublishing.com

America's Got Powers #1

★★★

Image

$2.99, color, 44 pgs.
Writer: Jonathan Ross
Artists: Bryan Hitch, Paul Neary

WARN A FEW PEOPLE?
AND THE SADDEST THING? WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHY THAT THING CAME WITH YOU OUT POWERS WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN
WE'LL NEVER KNOW

Americans have had a long-running love affair with reality television. Every imaginable subject has been covered, from parking-ticket disputes to people competing for contents of abandoned storage lockers.

It was only a matter of time (at least in the fictional universe) until a television network had super-powered combatants in a stadium on live television, with brutal results.

Seventeen-year-old Tommy Watts is not one of those people; he's a simple clerk in the stadium's gift shop. However, he has a vested interest in the games, since his older brother Bobby was once a contestant. When he finds himself accidentally placed in harm's way, something happens that will change his simple existence forever.

This is a frightening look at a future in which television ratings outweigh concerns for a person's life. Hitch does an incredible job of bringing the story to life, with action scenes that are so good they may cause readers to flinch. The $2.99 cover price is incredibly low for a double-sized issue.

— Christopher Galvan

www.imagecomics.com

DC Universe Presents #5

★★★½

DC

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Paul Jenkins
Artist: Bernard Chang

It's appropriate that a character forever positioned between Heaven and Hell spends so much time in comics Limbo, but, whenever Deadman's let out to play, many fans cheer. And the serial kicking off DC's new spotlight title has been one of Boston Brand's strongest.

In "Twenty Questions," Deadman asks the most obvious question of his existence: Why did the goddess Rama Kushna give him the task of helping lost souls? Why, of all the ghosts in all the world, has *he* wandered into her plan? And, after five issues of dealing with Gotham's supernatural society, he gets a chance to strike a new deal with his patron-tormentor. Rama Kushna dealt with, Deadman helps his latest "case," a disabled war veteran, find peace and even grabs a little solace for himself.

Paul Jenkins deftly weaves philosophy into the super-hero narrative via smart plotting and sharp dialogue, while Bernard Chang's layouts are as imaginative as his people are fascinating, making Deadman's world suitably weird. And Ryan Sook's covers are glorious.

If you missed this superb mini-series, a trade is on the way — haunt the stands.

— Martin Gray

www.dccomics.com

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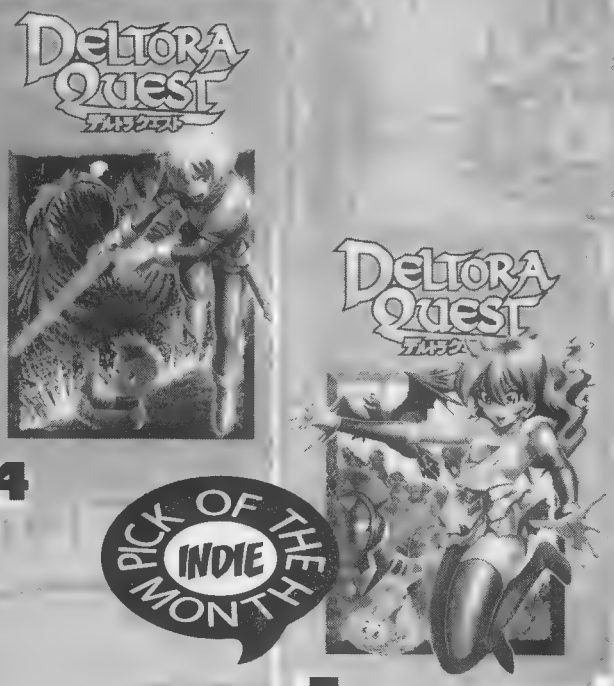
REVIEWS



Garfield #1

★★★

Boom/Kaboom
$3.99, color, 24 pgs.
Writer: Mark Evanier
Artist: Gary Barker

Despite its popularity, *Garfield's* existence as a newspaper strip has contained a numbing sameness for many years. The jokes and storylines have been repetitive and predictable. However, the animated series that aired on Cartoon Network was much different, with imaginative storylines, humorous dialogue, and a variety of entertaining characters.

Fortunately, the new *Garfield* comic book is much closer in tone to the animated series than the comic strip, which may be due to writer Mark Evanier's involvement with both projects.

When Garfield's nemesis Nermal discovers a rare comic book, hilarity ensues. While his owner Jon sees nothing but dollar signs, Garfield sees thousands of pounds of potential lasagna. At the same time, he has to contemplate the ethics of profiting from a comic book that was accidentally thrown out by his senior-citizen neighbor.

Gary Barker's art is faithful both to the characters and to the comic strip from which it originates. There is also a funny backup story about a mouse that finds it impossible to believe in the existence of a cat that prefers eating pasta to eating mice. Boom continues to release great kid-friendly titles under its Kaboom imprint.

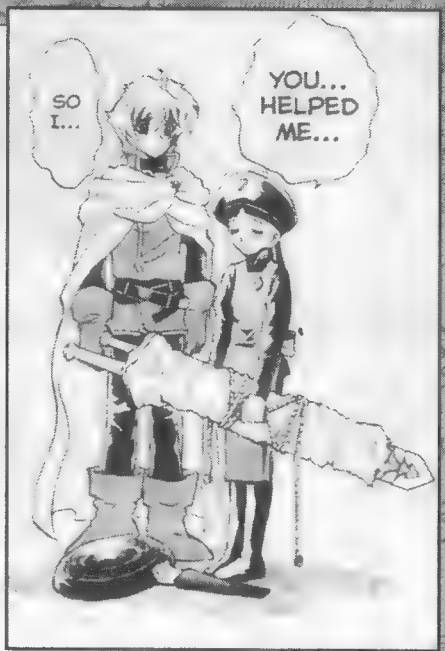
— Christopher Galvan

www.kaboom-studios.com

Deltora Quest Vols. 4 & 5

★★★★

Kodansha Comics
$10.99 @, color, 192 pgs. @
Writer: Emily Rodda
Artist: Makota Niwano



Deltora Quest is a children's fantasy series written by Australian Emily Rodda and adapted into manga format by Makoto Niwano. It follows the traditional wandering group — Lief, the hero; Barda, Lief's guardian; and Jasmine, a wild girl who can talk to animals and trees — out to save their homeland of Deltora from the evil Shadow Lord. They must collect the seven gems of the Deltora Belt to restore their kingdom. In volumes four and five of the quest, the group travels to a town whose citizens have been cursed with silence and a dangerous lake monster who guards a gem. The monster, however, has its own tragic past.

Readers will see generic manga characters and backgrounds: little, really, to catch their attention. A younger reader will instantly pick it up, because of the "Oh! It's manga, so it's cool!" factor.

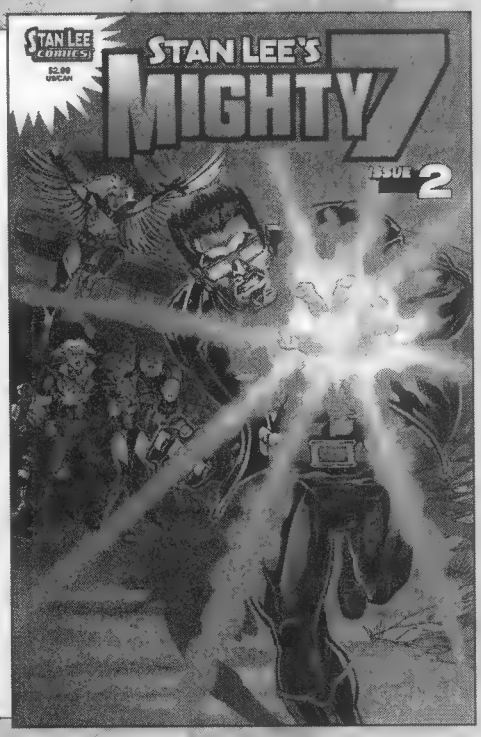
Since it uses a standard fantasy formula, the story requires readers to overcome the clichés to see its exciting, well-thought-out tale. On the other hand, readers unfamiliar with the genre and hungry for something new will gobble up each volume and eagerly wait for the next.

— Whitney Grace

http://www.kodanshausa.com
ISBNs: 978-1935429319, 978-1612620114

Stan Lee's Mighty 7 #2 ★★

Archie
$2.99, color, 24 pgs.
Writers: Tony Blake, Paul Jackson, Stan Lee
Artist: Alex Saviuk



Stan Lee's newest project, *Stan Lee's Mighty 7*, returns to many of his tried and true techniques. In #2, a group of alien criminals and star marshals (think intergalactic police officers) have crashed on Earth, right in front of Stan Lee.

As the marshals round up the cons who try to escape, they enlist Lee's help.

He agrees, in exchange for the right to tell their story in comic books. As Lee takes the group to find a place to hide, scientist Dr. Zorbo has a lab accident, exposing him to radiation.

The exposure gives him great strength and powers, but at the cost of his looks. He now feels as though he can't impress the woman he loves, and that sends him into a vengeful rage. The results are old-school comic-book fun.

For those readers looking for something groundbreaking, this may not be the choice.

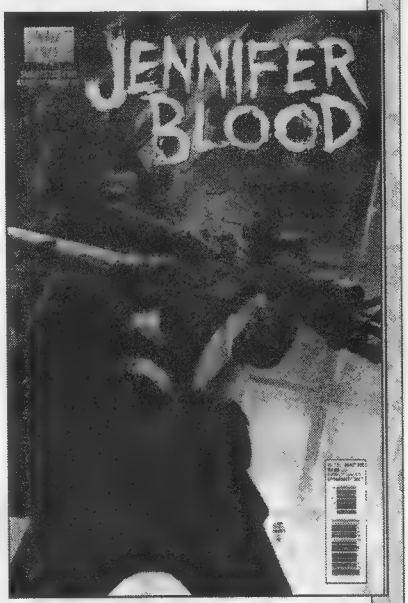
For readers looking for a quick, fun story that reminds them of a simpler time in comics, *Stan Lee's Mighty 7* is a great pick!

— Dave Christian

www.archiecomics.com

Jennifer Blood #10 ★★★

Dynamite
$3.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Al Ewing
Artist: Kewber Baal



Jennifer Blood, the tale of a suburban housewife turned ruthless assassin, has been a thoroughly enjoyable series since it began. This remains the case, despite the title's having completed its initial story arc and gone into something of a "post-game show." While no longer pursuing her mission of vengeance, Jennifer continues to deal with the consequences of her actions in hopes of returning to her normal life. Unfortunately for Jen, many other agendas happen to run counter to hers.

We're developing a fondness for Jen's neighbor, Jack (a former stalker and something of a liability), who is trying to save his life by making himself useful to her. He's not very good at it but his inept attempts are sincere. We also see Jen tie up a loose end in the form of a mob boss with a particularly unpleasant fetish.

If there's one flaw, it's the blatant promotion of *The Ninjettes*, a spin-off series featuring fan-favorite characters killed off in their first appearance. It's OK to plug, especially items of interest to readers, but this sort of advertising should be dialed back a bit.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.dynamite.net

Merciless: The Rise of Ming #1 ★★★½

Dynamite
$3.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Scott Beatty
Artists: Ron Adrian, Roni Setiawan, Alex Ross

Spinning out of the events of Dynamite's *Flash Gordon* series, *Merciless: The Rise of Ming* is a mini-series that chronicles the early life of Ming the Merciless — Flash Gordon's deadliest foe — and his rise to power as emperor of Mongo.

If you're expecting this to resemble the campy 1980s *Flash Gordon* film, then you're setting yourself up for disappointment. This is a serious story, and author Scott Beatty treats Alex Raymond's characters with respect and adds plenty of rich layers.

Prince Ming is ambitious and power-hungry, anxious to inherit his father's throne. When Queen Qroze, ruler of The Hawkmen, refuses to attend a meeting Ming's daddy has arranged among all the rulers of Mongo's races, Ming confronts her. However, she embarrasses him — and he retaliates, demonstrating how merciless he is.

Alex Ross provides a phenomenal cover. However, the heroes are artist Ron Adrian and colorist Roni Setiawan; they make a great team. It's refreshing to open up a book to see art that rivals what's on the cover, especially following as tough an act as Ross'.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

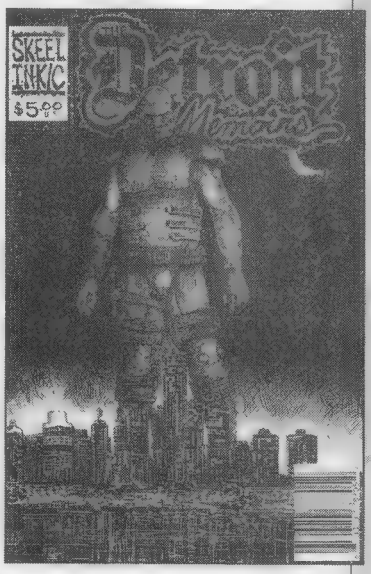
www.dynamite.net

The Detroit Memoirs #1 ★★★

Skeel Inc.

$5, b/w, 48 pgs.

Writer and artist: Josh Skeel



The Detroit Memoirs is a well-written and spectacularly drawn independent comic book. As the title implies, it takes place in Motown with writer Jack Thorpe interviewing Ozzie Taliaferro, a retired cop in a nursing home. Ozzie was a participant in The Protectorate Program (which is similar to The Weapon X Program or Project: Rebirth — it produces a super-human soldier).

Ozzie recounts what happened a decade ago, when The General — the first graduate of The Protectorate Program — had a rampage in downtown Detroit that rivaled one of The Hulk's temper tantrums. He easily defeated the cops, the federal authorities, and the military, so it was up to Ozzie, who was well past his prime, to take him down. Writer and artist Josh Skeel knows Detroit and gets the city landmarks and streets right on the money.

There are a few typos in the mix, but they're forgivable. There are gory scenes and coarse language, but they fit the story. Skeel is a talented creator who should be working with one of the major publishers.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

http://skeel76.deviantart.com/

Prophecy #1 ★★★

Dynamite

$3.99, color, 32 pgs.

Writer: Ron Marz

Artists: Walter Geovani

Prophecy is Dynamite's ambitious crossover event. The first issue focuses on Red Sonja with appearances by Vampirella, Dracula, and, for some reason, Sherlock Holmes. The series is scheduled to include Allan Quatermain, Reanimator Herbert West, Dorian Gray, and numerous other characters.

It's odd, given the lengths to which they've gone to avoid time travel in the *Witchblade/Red Sonja* crossover, that *Prophecy* begins with a time-displaced she-devil with a sword. Nevertheless, the *method* of time travel employed is acceptable, and the times and places of the time-lost swordstress fit into her general milieu. No jarring Conan-in-Manhattan stylings here, folks! At least, not yet.

Ever since DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and Marvel's *Secret Wars*, company-wide crossovers have been *de rigueur*. From *Total Eclipse* to *Atlas United*, everybody's done it. So far, *Prophecy* is off to a good start by not cramming every character into the first installment. If Dynamite continues to take its time to let things unwind naturally and give the characters room to develop their own stories, it bodes well for the finished product.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.dynamite.net

My Sister, The Freak Vol. 1 ★★★

Dani Jones

$19.95, color, 100 pgs.

Writer and artist: Dani Jones

It's hard to believe that this book is self-published, given the high quality of the story, the art, and the production. Many self-published works are amateurish projects that look as if they've been hastily put together at Kinkos, but not Dani Jones' *My Sister, The Freak*. It's a sweet all-ages story about two sisters — Alyson (alias Al) and younger sibling Mary (a comic-book geek who marches to the beat of a different drummer). They learn about the value of family — and how to repel an alien invasion. It's charming.

There are cute and funny moments, some of which are blatant, some of which are subtle. Jones — who draws greeting cards, children's books, and material for other media — provides top-notch art. Extras include behind-the-scenes notes, sketches, art by other artists, activities (crossword puzzles), and coloring pages. It would behoove another "all-ages" publisher to pick it up for wider distribution.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.mysisterthefreak.com

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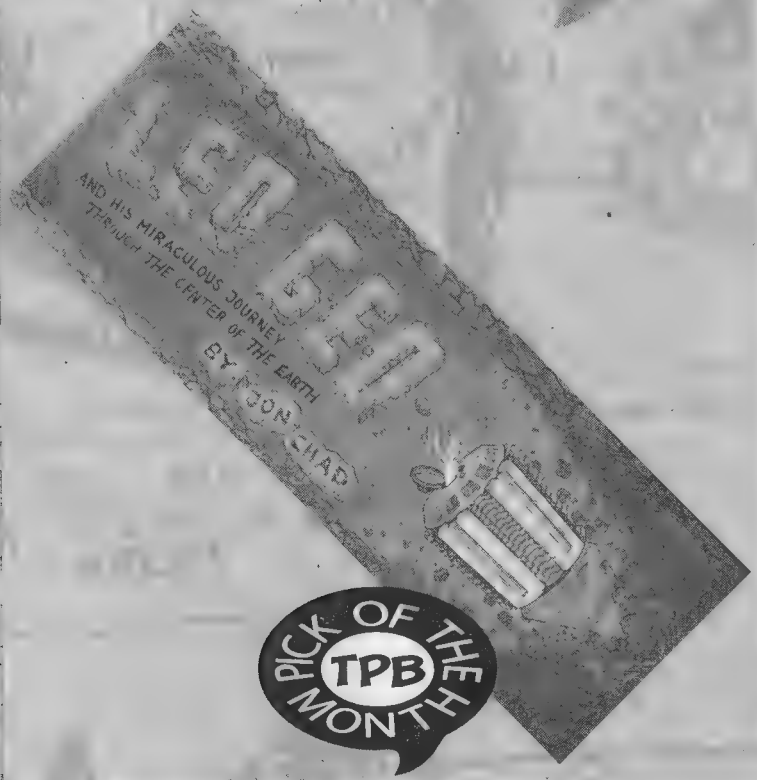


PICK OF THE MONTH TPB

My Friend Dahmer ★★★

Abrams Books
$17.95, b/w, 224 pgs.
Writer and artist: Derf Backderf

Derf Backderf, a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award recipient for his political cartoons, went to high school with notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. This graphic novel — complete with copious source notes at the end — depicts Dahmer's descent into madness, as his deviant behavior began to surface in high school.

Backderf offers a look into the deranged mind of an infamous murderer. He indicates that the two not only knew each other but that Dahmer was the mascot of his circle of friends, often imitating people with cerebral palsy. Backderf, he says, never got close to Dahmer because something about his schoolmate put him ill at ease.

Disturbing. Disgusting. Brutally honest and raw. Respectfully crafted and realistic. Not only does the work get into Dahmer's head — a place you don't want to be — but it offers insights into his descent, as well as a look at life in the suburban 1970s. Backderf doesn't condone what Dahmer did and writes in the introduction that he has no sympathy for Dahmer. He just introduces the reader to Dahmer's origin — and a disturbing one it is.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.abramsbooks.com
ISBN: 978-1419702174

Leo Geo and His Miraculous Journey through the Center of the Earth ★★★★

Roaring Brook Press
$15.99, b/w, 40 pgs.
Writer and artist: Job Chad

Following in the footsteps of Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, Leo Geo is an intrepid explorer who sets out for his own adventure through the Earth's core.

His story is, of course, a fictional account filled with fantastic beasts and machines, coupled with facts about each of the Earth's layers. The encyclopedic trivia is well camouflaged by the comic's vertical positioning — the book must be read in a vertical format that simulates Leo's descent.

With a lack of regular panels, another bold choice for Jon Chad was Leo's character design as a solid, blank figure with a face.

In counterpoint to that design, Leo travels through a world filled with rich backgrounds — from the tiniest rock to the huge subterranean monsters waiting to devour him.

Education and entertainment are a hard combo to pull off, but when a little fantasy is added, it becomes an awesome adventure. The only question remaining is where Leo Geo will journey in his next adventure.

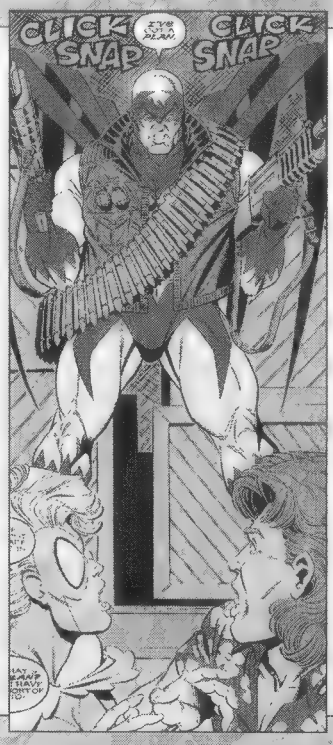
— Whitney Grace

http://us.macmillan.com/splash/publishers/roaring-brook-press.html
ISBN: 978-1596436619

Hawk & Dove: Ghosts and Demons ★★

DC

$14.99, color, 128 pgs.
Writers: Barbara Kesel, Karl Kesel
Artists: Rob Liefeld, Karl Kesel



Following the death of Don Hall — alias Dove — in *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Dawn Granger (aka the new Dove) is introduced in this 1988 mini-series. Hank Hall (aka Hawk), Don's brother, doesn't like her.

However, they put aside their differences to battle Kestrel, who wants Hawk dead.

Barbara and Karl Kesel collaborate on the writing with the latter Kesel doing double-duty inking Rob Liefeld's pencils. This was one of Liefeld's early assignments in comics, and his performances ranges between decent and good. It's been said before: Liefeld works best with collaborators. Karl Kesel complements his style well. There is a prophetic panel of the grim-n-gritty era of comics Liefeld helped usher in, with Hawk wielding big guns.

The story is straightforward, but painful at the outset. Dawn's introduction is abrupt, making readers go, "Huh?" Some of the dialogue is cringeworthy at first, and Hawk is unlikable. However, things get better in subsequent chapters, as the writers focus more on Dawn, who's more likable and interesting than Hawk.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *Hawk & Dove* (1988) #1-5
www.dccomics.com
ISBN: 978-1401233976

Three Stooges #1: "Bed-Bugged!" ★★★

Papercutz

$6.99, color, 64 pgs.
Writers: George Gladir, Jim Salicrup
Artist: Stan Goldberg

With a new *Three Stooges* feature film just released on DVD, Papercutz is releasing a series of small tie-in trade paperbacks. The first features tales in which The Stooges become sumo wrestlers, audition for a science-fiction Western, and renovate a haunted house, among other misadventures. (Frequent, unexplained references to raising money for an orphanage are, no doubt, intended as a link to the film.)

This volume includes the work of some A-list creators. Stan Goldberg's art, in particular, helps readers of all generations to enjoy these stories.

Such old fogies as yours truly can see the original Moe, Larry, and Curly on the page. Newbies will be able to see Stooge successors Sean Hayes, Chris Diamantopoulos, and Will Sasso. (And, if you care what The Stooges would look like in Riverdale, that works, too!)

Bed-Bugged is a fun introduction to The Stooges for kids as well as a nice throwback for long-time fans. These comics have broader appeal than mere merchandising.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.papercutz.com
ISBN 978-1-59707-315-8

Avengers: The Big Three ★★★

Marvel

$29.99, color, 272 pgs.
Writers: Steve Englehart, Jim Shooter, *et al.*
Artists: George Pérez, Alan Weiss, *et al.*

Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man are considered "The Big 3" Avengers, and this collection highlights their bond and greatest adventures. Jack Kirby's iconic art graces the cover, but the first page, featuring George Pérez' picture of the characters pumping their fists should have been the cover, because it better fits this collection's theme.

One story that conveys their sense of duty does so when The Molecule Man disintegrates Cap's shield, Iron Man's armor, and Thor's hammer. Cap orders a naked Tony Stark and a crippled Don Blake to find cover, but they object. Stark tells him Iron Man's more than just armor, while Blake tells him that The Avengers have assembled — and Cap's respect for them goes up a notch. Blake even punches Molecule Man in the nose — not bad for a "gimpy guy."

They also battle their counterparts: USAgent, War Machine, and Thunderstrike. A funny moment has Iron Man telling War Machine he's embarrassing him in front of Cap. Other creators showcased are Andrea DiVito, Mike Oeming, David Michelinie, Gerry Conway, Sal Buscema, Mike Gustovich, and Mark Gruenwald.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *Avengers* (1963) #150-151, #215-216, #224, (1998) #21, *Avengers: The Terminatrix Objective* #1-4, *Captain America* (1968) #176, *Thor* (1998) #81
www.marvel.com
ISBN: 978-0785159384

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Oz-Wonderland Chronicles Book 2 ★★★

Buy Me Toys.com
$19.99, color, 184 pgs.
Writers: Ben Avery, Casey Heying
Artists: Heying, Rick Mays, *et al.*

The Oz/Wonderland Chronicles is a modern sequel to L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* books, both of which are in the public domain. Jack Pumpkinhead (of whom the creative team makes great use, staying true to Baum's vision) and The Cheshire Cat want to explore Earth to see what makes it so special. They take up with fantasy novelist Mae Manning and go on a road trip.

However, there are forces hunting down denizens from Oz and Wonderland, making it clear they're not welcome on Earth. Naturally, Jack and Cheshire Cat are targeted, with Mae caught in the crossfire. The creative team also brings in The Patchwork Girl from the *Oz* mythos, who explores Earth with a wide-eyed innocence. She's also on the list.

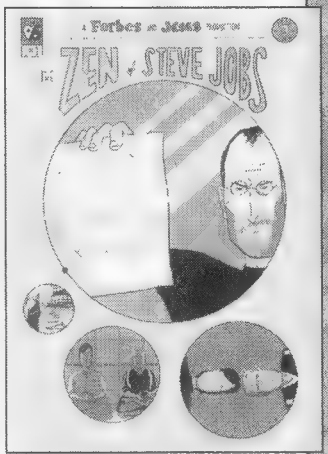
Casey Heying is one of several artists on the title. He is joined by David Hahn, Craig Rousseau, Rick Mays, Tim Baron, Mike S. Miller, and many more. Despite the large number of artists on this project, their styles complement one another nicely and deliver high-quality indie storytelling.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *Jack & Cat Tales* #1-3, *Jack & Cat Special* #1
www.buymetoys.com
ISBN: 978-0982875018

The Zen of Steve Jobs ★★

Wiley
$19.95, color, 80 pgs.
Writer: Caleb Melby
Artists: Jess3 Studios



The Zen of Steve Jobs explores the Apple guru's friendship with Kobun Chino Otogawa, a Zen Buddhist priest who broke with traditional practices. The graphic novel focuses on Jobs' leaving Apple in the 1980s and studying with Kobun: leading to integration of Buddhist principles into the Apple company and products so many love today.

Many hands were involved with this project as a tribute to a revolutionary genius. Caleb Melby, a *Forbes* writer, provided the script, and Jess3 Studios created the art. Jobs and Kobun's time together was sporadic. The comic was written to reflect that, but the time-hopping leaves much to be desired in connecting with the subjects. The art is described as a "monochromatic palette, which [was] designed to change from scene to scene," reflecting Jobs' changing tastes. This would have been a good idea for a more cohesive story, but the changing styles only contribute to the muddled script. The art itself, though, is pleasing and would have enhanced the reading experience — had the story measured up.

Jobs and Kobun's friendship is interesting, but its Zen is chaotic.

— Whitney Grace

http://www.wiley.com
ISBN: 978-1118295267

Buffy the Vampire Slayer — Season 9: Freefall ★★★

Dark Horse
$17.99, color, 136 pgs.
Writers: Joss Whedon, Andrew Chambliss, Jane Espenson
Artists: George Jeanty, Karl Moline

Buffy Season 9 gets off to a slow, rocky start but evens out in subsequent chapters: Such jokes as a demon's hunting Buffy down so she can pay her student loans from her college days just go clunk. Nevertheless, things pick up.

Since there's no more magic in the world, Willow is powerless. That creates tension between Buffy and her. A powerful villain is creating "zompires" — a hybrid of vampires and zombies. Zombies had to find their way into *Buffy*, given their high stock in pop culture with *The Walking Dead* — but leave it to Joss Whedon and Andrew Chambliss (who writes for TV's *Once upon a Time*) to do a different twist on that particular monster.

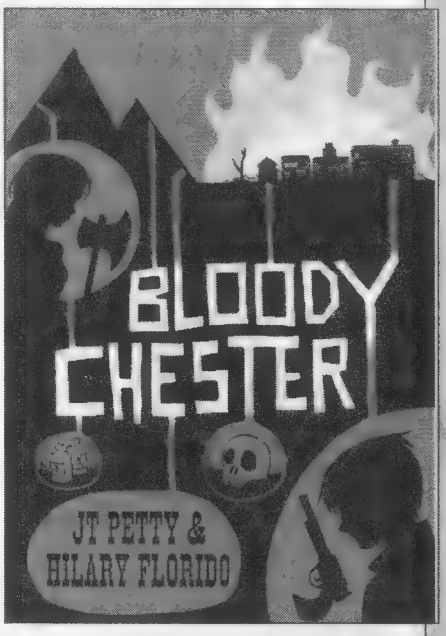
Artist George Jeanty does his usual great job of illustrating Buffy's comic-book adventures. He moves readers through some of the story's rough spots and delivers some good, old-fashioned Slayer action, as well as a tender moment at the end between Buffy and Spike regarding a controversial storyline.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Season 9* #1-5
www.darkhorse.com
ISBN: 978-1595829221

Bloody Chester ★★½

First Second
$18.99, color, 160 pgs.
Writer: JT Petty
Artist: Hilary Florido



Chester Kates is a teen loner, living a hard life in the Old West, where pummeling is a daily event. One day, he's hired to burn down the ghost town of Whale, wiped out by a mysterious plague, to make way for the railroad. Upon arrival, Chester discovers Whale is still occupied by a beautiful woman, a boy, and a wounded priest. Chester tries to force them to leave but discovers the sad truth behind the plague.

Bloody Chester offers two great features: Hilary Florido's art and the story's potential. Florido's style is lighthearted and runs contrary to the story's dark themes. Her work would be perfect for children's comics but being used in a semi-horror Western story adds a layer of black humor. JT Petty's writing has potential (meaning there are great ideas in this graphic novel), but he failed to develop them. Readers barely get a chance to know the characters before the plot changes, and too much mystery is left unexplored. The graphic novel has great art, but, like the town of Whale, it is plagued with underdeveloped ideas.

— Whitney Grace

http://www.firstsecond.com
ISBN: 978-1596431003

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CBG TRENDWATCH: Michael Tierney, Collector's Edition

After a monster-good May that was my best May of the New Millennium, June was a huge disappointment, as sales crashed for both new and old comics. June ended up being one the worst months of the year so far, all the way down to last year's low June levels.

Sales cooled on the very day that the announcement of *Earth 2* #2 (featuring a gay Golden Age Green Lantern) was made. Local talk radio thought it was Hal Jordan who was changing his sexual orientation, and the jammed phone lines kept us from setting the record straight. Customer traffic stayed down by 25% for nearly the entire month, as sales dropped for both DC and Marvel by that same percentage.

Sales didn't pick back up again until the end of the anniversary sale for The Comic Book Store, completing 23 years of multiple store locations. Strangely, comics got hot again on a super-hot day, when the thermostat hit 107°.

But June did see a huge increase in one demographic — with more women visiting than since the heyday of manga. But they were mostly wives and girlfriends checking out the boyfriend's hobby, and they weren't buying.

Father's Day saw zero comics gift sales, with the only item sold being a Darth Vader "World's Greatest Father" bobblehead. In years past, this has been a big holiday for us.

And DC's digital push into the print market isn't working. I've stopped ordering most of DC's Combo Pack versions that offer digital copies for an extra $1. Most can't sell even a single copy.

But with July, DC did a strong rebound, as its new *Batman: Earth One* hardcover saw solid orders.

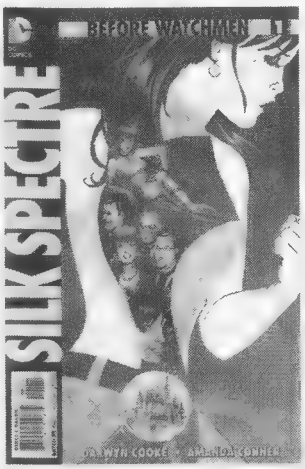
Valiant seems to be doing its relaunch the right way: going slowly and letting momentum build. Right now, *X-0 Manowar* is getting the best reactions.

Back issues dropped by a whole third from last month and dipped well below sales for last year's June levels, with most of the low prices on my Key Sales coming from the anniversary sale.

Key Sales (all unslabbed):
Amazing Spider-Man #54 VF+ $26.25
Avengers #20 VG+ $17
Avengers #29 VG $14.50
Avengers #90 FN $30.75
Avengers Annual #7 VG+ $12
Batman #240 VG+ $13.50
Four Color #422 (Donald Duck) VG+ $26.25
Sgt. Rock #308 FN+ $12
Sgt. Rock #319 VF+ $12
X-Men #16 VF- $39

— ***Michael Tierney*** *runs* ***Collector's Edition*** *in North Little Rock and* ***The Comic Book Store*** *in Little Rock, Ark. He can be reached at* ***cbsrock@swbell.net*** *or* ***(501) 791-4222.***

CBG TRENDWATCH: John Tinkess, Another Dimension



The *Before Watchmen* prequels began this month amid a lot of controversy but were still huge sellers, despite some fans' mixed feelings. While the *Watchmen* buzz was strong, it still wasn't enough to displace *Avengers vs. X-Men* from the top of the charts, as Marvel's summer event seems to gain more readers every month. "Night of the Owls" earned Batman two spots in our Top 10 and *Earth 2* #2 with the revelations of Green Lantern Alan Scott's sexual orientation pushed sales higher than usual. *Saga* by Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples continues to be our top-selling Image item, and we are constantly selling all the previous issues to new readers. Image also scored big with the release of *Walking Dead* Vol. 16, which was our highest-selling trade paperback and overall biggest moneymaker for the month.

The two biggest disappointments this month both come from Marvel. *Astonishing X-Men* #51, featuring the wedding of Northstar and Kyle, never really generated the outside interest we were expecting — and *Spider-Men* has failed to capture much interest outside of the die-hard Spider-Man fans.

One issue that didn't make our Top 30 but did sell much better than anticipated was Brian Wood's *The Massive* #1 from Dark Horse. After long and successful runs on *DMZ* and *Northlanders*, Wood has a strong and loyal following, so we ordered what we thought was a very healthy number but were surprised to see it nearly sell out in the first week.

Top Comics for June

Avengers vs. X-Men #5
Batman #10
Avengers vs. X-Men #6
Before Watchmen: Minutemen #1
Before Watchmen: Silk Spectre #1
Detective Comics #10
Earth 2 #2
Batman Annual #1
Before Watchmen: The Comedian #1
Saga #4
AvX Versus #3
Action Comics #10
Batman and Robin #10
Green Lantern #10
Amazing Spider-Man #687
Justice League #10
Avengers #27
New Avengers #27
Uncanny X-Men #13
Swamp Thing #10
Spider-Men #1
Avengers Assemble #4
Before Watchmen: Nite Owl #1
Secret Avengers #28
Uncanny X-Force #26
Batgirl #10
Daredevil #14
Animal Man #10
Astonishing X-Men #51
Nightwing #10

— ***John Tinkess*** *runs* ***Another Dimension*** *in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He can be reached at* ***comics@another-dimension.com*** *or* ***(403) 283-7078.***

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CALIFORNIA

Every Wed. and Sat. CA, City Of Industry. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave.. SH: 9am-5pm. A: Free. T: 250. Johnny, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA, 91748. PH: 909- 444-7955.

Oct 13-14 CA, San Francisco. Alternative Press Expo (APE). Concourse Exhibition Center, 635 8th St. Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA, 92112. PH: 619- 491-2475.

Nov 3-4 CA, Long Beach. Comic and Horror Con. Convention Center. Mad Event Management LLC. www.longbeachcomic-con.com

CONNECTICUT

Oct 14 CT, Manchester. Comic, Coin & Sports Card Show. East Catholic High School, 115 New State Rd. SH: 9am-2pm. A: $.99. Natale. PH: 860- 803-0810.

DELAWARE

Sep 23 DE, Newark. Sports Card, Comic Book & Collectible Show. Aetna Fire Hall, 400 Ogletown Rd.. SH: 10am-3pm. A: $2., 12 & under free. T: 50. PH: 302- 983-2636 or a2zshows1@yahoo.com.

Oct 21 DE, Newark. Sports Card, Comic Book & Collectible Show. Aetna Fire Hall, 400 Ogletown Rd.. SH: 10am-3pm. A: $2., 12 & under free. T: 50. PH: 302- 983-2636 or a2zshows1@yahoo.com.

FLORIDA

Oct 20-21 FL, Tampa. Tampa Bay Comic Con. Doubletree Hotel, 4500 W. Cypress St. SH: Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. A: $10. inquiries@tampabaycomiccon.comwww.tampabaycomiccon.com

ILLINOIS

Oct 14 IL, Chicago. Toys, Comics & Statues Convention. Holiday Inn of Midway Airport, 6624 South Cicero. SH: 8am-3pm. A: $4. Leo Guerrero. PH: 773- 242-0041 or t-c-s@inbox.com.

Oct 21 IL, Peoria. Comic Book Convention. Grand Hotel, 4400 N. Brandywine Dr.. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309- 657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

INDIANA

Oct 28 IN, Indianapolis. Comic Book Show. Ramada Inn, 6990 E. 21st St.. SH: 9:30am-3:30pm. A: $4.. T: 60. Andy Holzman. PH: 317- 824-9602 or www.epguides.com/comics.

MICHIGAN

Sep 23 MI, Livonia. X-trava Con. Knights of Columbus Hall, 19801 Farmington Rd.. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $3. F: $55-$60. Michael Goldman. PH: 248- 426-8059.

Oct 21 MI, Livonia. X-trava Con. Knights of Columbus Hall, 19801 Farmington Rd.. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $3. F: $55-$60. Michael Goldman. PH: 248- 426-8059.

MINNESOTA

Oct 6 MN, St. Paul. MCBA Fallcon Comic Book Party. Minnesota State Fairgrounds, Education Building, 1265 Snelling Ave North. SH: 10am-4pm. mncba@aol.com-www.midwestcomicbook.com

MISSOURI

Sep 22 MO, St. Louis. Comic Book Convention. Comfort Inn Airport, 9600 Natural Bridge Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309- 657-1599.

NEW JERSEY

Sep 23 NJ, Secaucus. Comic Art Con. Meadowlands Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2 Harmon Plaza. SH: 10am-4:30pm. Joe Veteri. PH: 973- 768-6649 or Dan Gallo, PH: 954-547-9063 or joe@comicartshowcase.com.

NEW YORK

Oct 11-14 NY, New York. Comic Con. Jacob K. Javitz Convention Center, 655 W. 34th St. Reed Exhibitions, 383 Main Ave., Norwalk, CT, 06851. PH: 203- 840-4800 or www.nycc.com.

Oct 21 NY, Syracuse. Collectorsfest-Sports Memorabilia & Toy Show. State Fairgrounds, State Fair Blvd., Rt. 690 exit 7. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $4., under 10 free. T: 150. CNY Promos., 24 Argyle Place #1, Cortland, NY, 13045. evenings, PH: 607-753-8580 or cnypromotions@twcny.rr.com.

NORTH CAROLINA

Sep 22-23 NC, Raleigh. Toy, Hobby & Sportscard Show. State Fairgrounds, Kerr Scott Bldg., 1025 Blue Ridge Rd.. SH: Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. A: $5-$7. T: 175. Inside Pitch Promotions, Wes Starkey. PH: 540- 593-3736 or wes@swva.net.

Oct 27 NC, Hickory. Toy, Hobby & Sportscard Show. Metro Convention Center, I-40, Exit 125. SH: 9am-4pm. A: $4. T: 150. Inside Pitch Promotions, Wes Starkey. PH: 540- 593-3736 or wes@swva.net.

OHIO

Sep 29-30 OH, Columbus. Mid-Ohio-Con. Greater Columbus Convention Center, Battelle Hall, 400 North High St. Wizard World Conventions, Courney McVicker, 1010 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10018. PH: 646- 380-2477.

Oct 14 OH, Cleveland. Comic, Card & Nostalgia Show. American Legion Hall, 22001 Brookpark Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $4. T: 40. F: $65-$75. Jeff Harper, PO Box 1371, Locust Grove, VA, 22508. PH: 540- 412-2879.

TEXAS

Oct 26-28 TX, Austin. Comic Con. Convention Center, 500 East Cesar Chavez St. Wizard World Conventions, Courney McVicker, 1010 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10018. PH: 646-380-2477.

VIRGINIA

Sep 16 VA, Richmond. Virginia Comicon. Crowne Plaza West , 6531 West Broad St. SH: 10am-3:30pm. http://vacomicon.com

WISCONSIN

Oct 20 WI, Oak Creek. Milwaukee Comic Book Convention. Classic Lanes, 7501 S. Howell Ave. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309- 657-1599 or www.epguides.com/comics.

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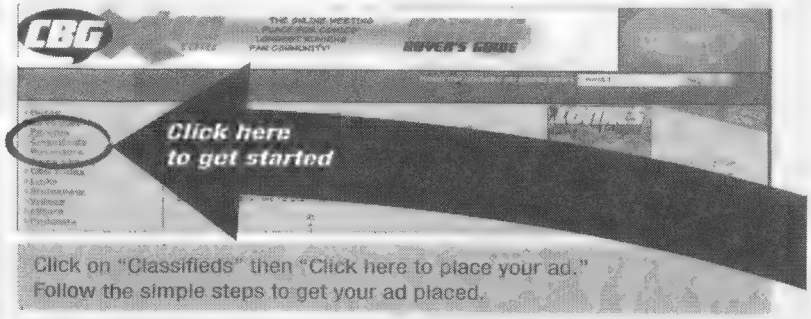

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A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Dan Tyree
1801 Snake Creek Rd.
Belfast, TN 37019

I've been meaning to drop you a line for a long time; then I Googled my name, and up popped my 52nd birthday on *CBGXtra*.

Has it really been 12 years since I unceremoniously faded away from writing the *Dan T's Inferno* column for ***CBG***? (And is next year really the 30th anniversary of my *starting* that endeavor?)

Time constraints and financial limitations curtailed my interaction with comic books for a long time, but my Nook Tablet and sheer determination are helping me slowly catch up with fandom.

I mostly wanted to let the old-timers know I'm still alive and well (although my father passed away about the time I quit writing for ***CBG***). Melissa and I celebrated our 21st wedding anniversary in June and have lived at the same address for 19 years. I'm still doing warehousing and communications work for the local farmers' cooperative.

From the *CBG* Archives: Dan Tyree

After eight years of trying, we finally became parents. Son Gideon is now eight years old. He has particularly enjoyed reading *The Essential Doctor Strange* Vol. 1 and *The Official Mandrake The Magician* Vol. 1. He doesn't know it, but his bedroom closet is full of old issues of the weekly ***CBG***.

A couple of years before phasing out *Dan T's Inferno*, I began self-syndicating a weekly humor column called *Tyrades!* in the Tennessee area. In December 2010, Cagle Cartoons picked it up for national syndication. (An archive of my columns can be found at *www.caglecartoons.com*.) *Humor Times* magazine is among the regular clients, but I can always use more. So if anyone is good at badgering local editors ...

If anyone would like to get in touch: my mailing address is above, my email is *tyreetyrades@aol.com*, and my Facebook fan page is *Tyree's Tyrades*.

Hope you'll continue bringing the old and new of the comics world to fandom for many years to come.

Brent: *It was quite the surprise to find this email in our* ***ohso@krause.com*** *mailbox. Dan's columns were always fun to edit back in the day, and we encourage fans to check out his current work.*

FOR ART'S SAKE

by Chris Smigliano

ONLINE BONUS! Don't want to wait to share your opinion? Log in now at *CBGXtra.com*, visit the *Oh, So?* area, and post away!

RIGHTS AND WISHES

Nelson Jimenez

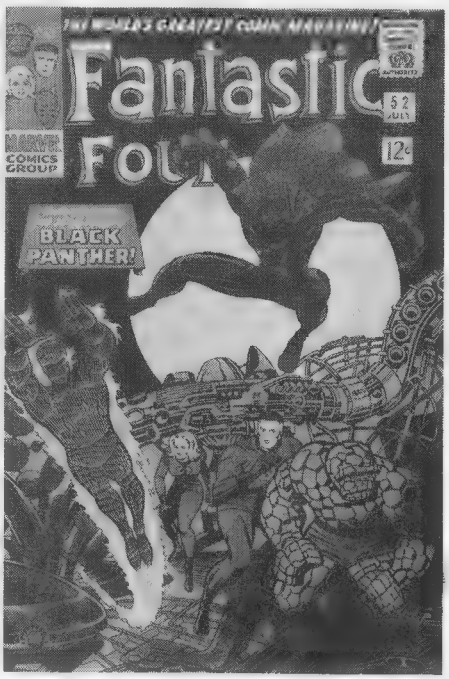
I just learned that Dynamite Entertainment has the rights to Peter Cannon, Thunderbolt and will feature him in a new series. I like the way they're tying the character to Ozymandias of *Watchmen*, since Alan Moore based his characters on various Charlton superheroes. I thought DC had the rights to all Charlton characters, so I wonder what happened in this instance. I don't think the series will do very well, since it already failed at both Charlton and DC, but I do like the new take on the split-colored costume. And it can't hurt to have Alex Ross on the covers. He seems to be Dynamite's secret weapon on most of its series' covers.

DC's "New 52" titles are still hot and cold to me. While I enjoy *Justice League* and *Aquaman*, the other titles don't interest me. I used to be a big Superman and Batman fan, but their titles just seem like old recycled storylines. I liked that DC took chances on *Mr. Terrific* and *Static* even though they were both canceled. I would like to see Cyborg and Tyroc be given their own titles, since both can start with clean slates.

Or how about a *Harry Potter* series adapting all the novels? I bet that would be a hit.

I notice that Marvel is coming out with Essential editions featuring Adam Warlock and Black Panther. But I was amazed to read that neither reprints the first-appearance stories by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. I wonder why. I would love the read the Him stories from *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* as well as the T'challa team-ups with The FF and Captain America. And I still have a wish to see *Essential FOOM*! There are a lot of interesting articles and art in that title that would interest many fans.

Brent: *According to Dynamite,* ***Peter Cannon*** *creator, writer, and artist Pete Morisi (aka PAM) didn't sign over all rights to Charlton back in the day, so there was a licensing arrangement with DC when it acquired Charlton's super-hero line. Moore's original plan for* ***Watchmen*** *was for it to feature those Charlton characters, but, when editors learned of his full plans and how it would affect the characters,*



his series used the archetypes, not the actual characters.

Several years ago, we examined the question of why there was no ***Harry Potter*** *comic book, and most of it boils down to J.K. Rowling's tight hold on the rights to her characters.*

In past ***Essentials****, Marvel hasn't been shy about including crossover issues (****Essential Avengers*** *and* ***Essential Defenders****, for example, have had all the chapters of "The Defenders/Avengers War" in their respective volumes). However, in the case of Adam Warlock and Black Panther, if all appearances prior to their solo outings were included, they would make up separate volumes by themselves. Those stories have already appeared in* ***Essential Fantastic Four*** *and* ***Essential Thor*** *books, so fans can seek them out there.*

While we're on the subject of dream collections, I, too, would like to see ***Essential FOOM*** *as well as a* ***Showcase Presents: The Amazing World of DC Comics****. They may be too far out of date for new readers but they'd be a wonderful dive into nostalgia for longtime fans.*

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WWW.LASTKISSINC.COM BY JOHN LUSTIG

Women adore comic book lovers! Why? Science isn't sure! But here at Last Kiss Central---we don't let pesky facts get in the way! We believe there must be at least a million reasons! Here's #1!*

Art by Dick Giordano with a possible assist by Vince Colletta ©2012 Last Kiss Inc.

HEROES WITH DEGREES

Scott Morrison, M.D.

In response to the letter from Richard Brown (***CBG*** #1690) inquiring about comics characters with advanced degrees, let me provide a list I've accumulated of super-heroes with medical degrees. I'm sure some are missing — undoubtedly a Golden Age character or two — and there are some

FLASHBACKS

220 yrs Sep 27, 1792 British caricaturist and illustrator **George Cruikshank** is born. He helps to develop the **"John Bull"** personification of England.

130 yrs Sep 4, 1882 Writer-artist **Harold H. Knerr** is born. He takes over Hearst's ***The Katzenjammer Kids*** from creator **Rudolph Dirks**.

100 yrs Sep 5, 1912 Animator and writer **Frank Thomas** is born. He's one of Disney's "Nine Old Men."

100 yrs Sep 21, 1912 Award-winning animator, artist, writer, producer, and director **Chuck Jones** is born. He's especially known for his **Road Runner** and **Bugs Bunny** cartoons for Warner Bros., though his work also includes animating ***Pogo*** and ***How the Grinch Stole Christmas***.

100 yrs Sep 22, 1912 Japanese writer-artist and political cartoonist **Ken Shimizu** is born. He creates ***Tokyo Senichi ya Monogatari*** and ***Kappa no Kawatoro***.

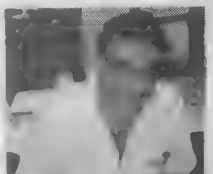
95 yrs Sep 9, 1917 Writer-artist **Frank Robbins** is born. He creates the ***Johnny Hazard*** strip and comic book.

95 yrs Sep 18, 1917 Voice artist **June Foray** is born. Her work includes such characters as **Rocky the Flying Squirrel** and, still working, she is apparently the oldest performer (at 94) to win an Emmy (for a performance on the ***Garfield*** TV show).

90 yrs Sep 10, 1922 Reuben Award-winning cartoonist and illustrator **Roy Doty** is born.

90 yrs Sep 25, 1922 "The Queen of Comics" **Roz Kirby** is born.

80 yrs Sep 3, 1932 Painter, teacher, illustrator, and editorial cartoonist **Don Bloom** is born.



75 yrs Sep 6, 1937 Cartoonist **Sergio Aragonés** is born.

75 yrs Sep 8, 1937 Writer, editor, and artist **Archie Goodwin** is born.

70 yrs Sep 1942 **Blue Beetle** gets a sidekick — **"Sparky"** — in ***Blue Beetle #14***.

70 yrs Sep 1942 Though he'd been a feature in newspapers for some time, Will Eisner's **The Spirit** appears in a newsstand comic book for the first time in ***Police Comics #11***.

70 yrs Sep 1942 Dell's ***Our Gang Comics #1*** introduces **Barney Bear**, **Tom and Jerry**, and (yes) **Our Gang** to comic books.

65 yrs Sep 6, 1947 Stereo-Man 3D Magazine publisher and CEO **Roger May** is born. He handles 3D conversions for Kitchen Sink.

65 yrs Sep 13, 1947 Writer-artist **Mike Grell** is born. He creates ***Warlord***, ***Jon Sable***, and ***Starslayer***.

65 yrs Sep 17, 1947 Three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist **Jeff MacNelly** is born. He also creates the ***Shoe*** comic strip.

65 yrs Sep 20, 1947 Emmy-winning writer and **Howard the Duck** creator **Steve Gerber** is born.

65 yrs Sep 27, 1947 Walt Disney's ***Fun & Fancy Free*** animated anthology opens.

65 yrs Sep 28, 1947 Will Eisner's ***Spirit*** newspaper supplement introduces flying saucers to comics three months after the first sighting is alleged in Idaho.

60 yrs Sep 5, 1952 Graphitti Designs owner and publisher **Bob Chapman** is born.

60 yrs Sep 10, 1952 Comic-book and TV writer **Gerry Conway** is born. He co-creates **Firestorm** and **Punisher** and kills **Gwen Stacy**.

60 yrs Sep 15, 1952 Writer-artist **Carol Lay** is born. She produces the ***Way Lay*** strip, writes the ***Mythos*** novel, and contributes to Bongo Comics.

60 yrs Sep 22, 1952 **Harold Tucker Webster** dies at age 67. The creator of **The Timid Soul** and **Life's Darkest Moments** produced more than 16,000 panel cartoons in his career.

60 yrs Sep 1952 ***Harvey Comics Hits #60*** introduces **Baby Huey** and **Casper the Friendly Ghost** to the Harvey line; the issue also features the first **Buzzy the Crow** and **Herman and Catnip** comic-book stories.

55 yrs Sep 3, 1957 Writer-artist **Paul Chadwick** is born. He creates ***Concrete***.

55 yrs Sep 16, 1957 Artist **Keith Williams** is born. He's best known for his work on Moonstone Comics projects and ***The Phantom***.

55 yrs Sep 18, 1957 Eisner-nominated artist **Dan Davis** is born. His work includes projects for DC and Bongo.

55 yrs Sep 20, 1957 Writer **Steve Ringgenberg** is born.

50 yrs Sep 3, 1962 Writer **Shelly Fisch** is born.

50 yrs Sep 16, 1962 Cartoonist **Gregory Gallant** is born. Under the pen name **"Seth,"** he produces ***Palookaville*** and ***It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken***.

50 yrs Sep 22, 1962 Artist, letterer, and colorist **Steve Lavigne** is born. He's known especially for his work on ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles***.

50 yrs Sep 24, 1962 Art director, editor, and writer **Mark Mazz** is born.

50 yrs Sep 1962 Marvel's ***Incredible Hulk #3*** introduces **Ringmaster** and **The Circus of Crime**.

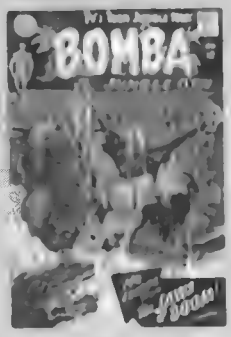
50 yrs Sep 1962 Marvel's ***Tales to Astonish #35*** introduces **Ant-Man** in costume.

45 yrs Sep 6, 1967 Writer-artist **Brian Clopper** is born.

45 yrs Sep 11, 1967 Cartoonist **Michael Wright** is born. He writes and draws the **"Jake"** series of kids' books.

45 yrs Sep 1967 Marvel's ***Amazing Spider-Man #52*** introduces **Joe Robertson**.

45 yrs Sep 1967 DC's ***Bomba, the Jungle Boy #1*** introduces the character to Silver Age comics; the character had starred in a series of adventure novels by **"Roy Rockwood"** starting in 1926.



40 yrs Sep 1972 Marvel's ***Captain America #153*** introduces **Jack Monroe** in a cameo.

35 yrs Sep 15, 1977 Keenspot co-founder **Chris Crosby** is born. He's the writer-artist of ***Superosity*** and writer of ***Sore Thumbs***.

30 yrs Sep 13, 1982 Artist **Rood Crandall** dies of a heart attack at age 65. He is especially noted for his work for Quality Comics (through the Eisner-Iger shop), the E.C. line, Warren magazines, and Tower Comics.

30 yrs Sep 17, 1982 Writer-artist **Hope Larson** is born. She creates ***Chiggers*** and is the publisher of Tulip Tree Press.

30 yrs Sep 1982 DC's ***New Teen Titans #23*** introduces the modern **Vigilante**.

25 yrs Sep 1987 Two independent comics distributors are assimilated: **Bud Plant** takes over **Alternate Realities**; **Second Genesis** takes over **Sunrise Comics**.

25 yrs Sep 1987 Marvel's ***Captain America #333*** introduces the **Captain America** who used to be **Super Patriot**.

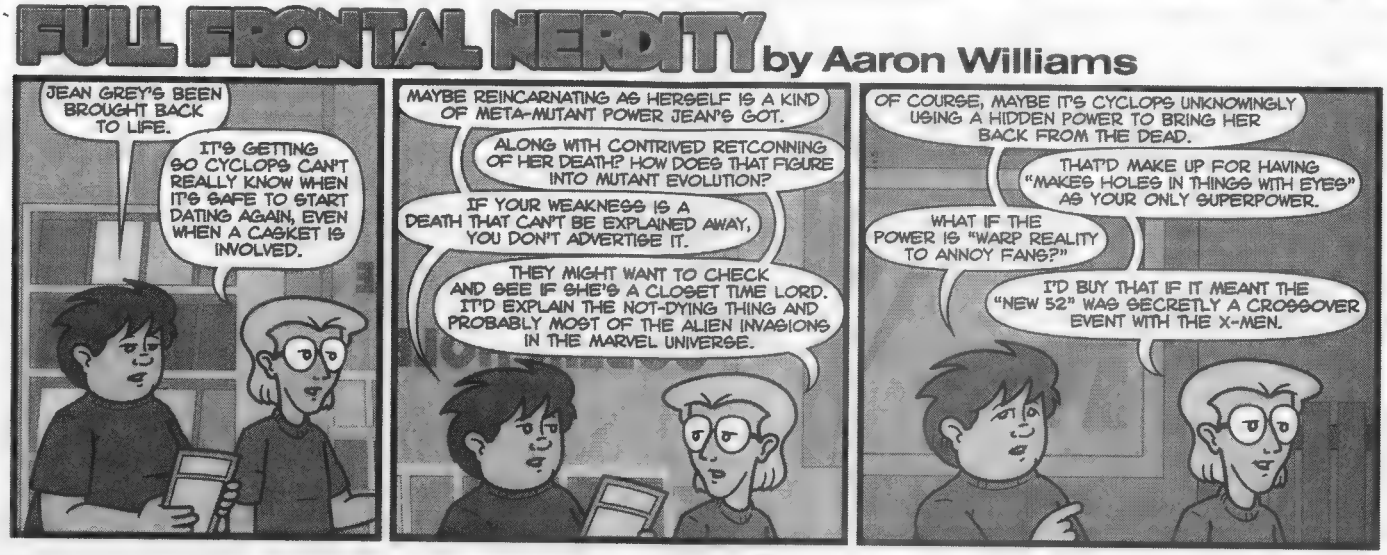
25 yrs Sep 1987 DC's ***Adventures of Superman #432*** introduces **Jose Delgado** (who becomes **Gangbuster**).

20 yrs Sep 11, 1992 ***Batman: The Animated Series*** introduces **Harley Quinn** (Dr. Harleen Frances Quinzel), created by **Paul Dini** and **Bruce Timm** and voiced by **Arleen Sorkin**.

20 yrs Sep 18, 1992 The ***Bob*** TV series kicks off its first season with "Mad Dog Returns," in which **Bob Newhart** plays a comic-book creator.

20 yrs Sep 21, 1992 **Brent Frankenhoff** starts work at Krause Publications as ***CBG*** editorial assistant.

5 yrs Sep 24, 2007 ***The Big Bang Theory*** begins.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ALONG WITH CONTRIVED RETCONNING OF HER DEATH? HOW DOES THAT FIGURE INTO MUTANT EVOLUTION?
IF YOUR WEAKNESS IS A DEATH THAT CAN'T BE EXPLAINED AWAY, YOU DON'T ADVERTISE IT.
THEY MIGHT WANT TO CHECK AND SEE IF SHE'S A CLOSET TIME LORD. IT'D EXPLAIN THE NOT-DYING THING AND PROBABLY MOST OF THE ALIEN INVASIONS IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE.
OF COURSE, MAYBE IT'S CYCLOPS UNKNOWINGLY USING A HIDDEN POWER TO BRING HER BACK FROM THE DEAD.
THAT'D MAKE UP FOR HAVING "MAKES HOLES IN THINGS WITH EYES" AS YOUR ONLY SUPERPOWER.
WHAT IF THE POWER IS "WARP REALITY TO ANNOY FANS?"
I'D BUY THAT IF IT MEANT THE "NEW 52" WAS SECRETLY A CROSSOVER EVENT WITH THE X-MEN.

whose exact degree is unclear (for example, Jericho Drumm, who has been alternately called a psychiatrist or a psychologist, though the latter seems more common).
Don Blake (Thor)
Beth Chapel (Dr. Midnight)
Pieter Cross (Dr. Mid-Nite)
Robert Dickering (Hangman)
Curtis Falconer (Aztek) (though one could argue Aztek never really had a medical degree)
Anthony Ludgate Druid (Dr. Druid)
Charles McNider (Dr. Mid-Nite)
Soranik Natu
Kent Nelson (Dr. Fate)
Cecilia Reyes
Leonard Samson
Stephen Strange
Rachel Steel
Michael Two-Youngmen (Shaman)

Occasional super-heroes are:
Elias Wirtham (Cardiac)
Harleen Quinzel (Harley Quinn)

BAT-DREAMS

Ralph Annan
9610 Clyde St.
Hudson, FL 34669

Just a comment to express how I feel about the last two Batman movies:

I grew up on Batman, and to me he is — and always will be — that smiling Batman on the cover of *Batman* #8, as chosen by John and Susan Bonner (*Top 10 Favorite Covers*, ***CBG*** #1693, Sep 12).

Batman and Robin: those two smiling wise-crackers, never down, always up. Fred Ray nailed the essence of those two joking caped crusaders.

And Tim Burton? If you're reading this, you were the best. You showed them how, but they wouldn't listen. And now, they say, it's over. But it won't be ...

Brent: *Each filmmaker has had his own vision of what makes Batman the character he is; there are, as you demonstrate, fans of every incarnation, from the 1940s movie serials to the 1960s camp TV series to Burton's two films through Joel Schumacher's two follow-ups and now Christopher Nolan's trilogy. I can see strong points and weak points in all of them and have enjoyed each for what it is.*

UNCHARACTERISTIC BEHAVIOR?

Richard M. Brown
2326 Cabot
Detroit, MI 48209

I disagree with the idea that Batman "retired" for eight years or so after the events of *The Dark Knight*. Regardless of how Gotham City might be better off, Batman is a tremendous super-hero who never relaxes.

Similarly, I winced at the idea that Bruce Banner can "Hulk out" at any time due to, as he says in *The Avengers*, "always being angry." Bill Bixby played a brilliant, tragic, and sympathetic hero. His Dr. Banner wasn't in a constant state of rage. Being slow to anger gives the character depth.

I'll never get over *Spider-Man 3* adding Sandman to Spider-Man's origin story. Toying with what I consider Stan Lee's greatest co-creation made no sense to Peter's origin. I do like the idea of Peter's all-but-forgotten parents playing a part in *The Amazing Spider-Man* film.

Comics fans have decades invested in these characters.

Brent: *As I wrote in response to Ralph Annan above, all fans have their favorite version (or versions) of their favorite characters. It can be linked to the age they were when they first encountered the character, a family memory from a favorite film, or some other trigger. There are fans of these characters who have never read a comic-book story featuring their favorites — but will flock eagerly to the latest film version.*

™ and © DC Comics.

TONY'S BACK PAGE

Tony Isabella

Hi-School Romance Date Book

The next-to-last Harvey Comics romances hit the newsstands in late 1958, but the publisher would take one final half-hearted crack at the genre in late 1962 and early 1963. *First Love Illustrated* #89 and #90 were 12¢, standard-sized comic books reprinting already-dated comics stories and features from the 1950s. That was also the case with *Hi-School Romance Datebook* #1-3, bimonthly "giant" issues dated from November 1962 to March 1963.

Hi-School Romance Datebook #2 (Jan 63) turned up in my Vast Accumulation of Stuff.

It's 68 pages of cover-to-cover comics and features with the only ads being small bottom-of-text-page panels promoting *Sad Sack, Wendy the Good Little Witch,* and *Little Audrey.* The uncredited cover looks to be new, but it could just as easily be retouched art from the 1950s.

There are eight comics stories. While I think I see the art of Bob Powell in a couple of them, the writers and artists of these tales have yet to be identified by the Grand Comics Database.

The issue also contains 20 single-page features on dating, odd romantic customs, fashion, and more.

The stories are your typical romantic triangles with a few notable exceptions. In "I Tried to Elope," the 15-year-old heroine and her 18-year-old beau use forged documents to thwart the objections of the girl's parents. In "Lovesick Fan," a woman meets and dates the celebrity piano man of a nightclub band. No rock-and-roll in this "vintage" tale of the 1950s.

GIANT ISSUE
25c
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
TRUE-LIFE LOVE STORIES VOTED BEST OF MONTH!
Hi School Romance
DATE BOOK
JANUARY
I LOVE HIM SO! IF I ONLY HAD THE COURAGE TO TALK TO HIM!
IN MY DREAMS HE WAS MY TRUE LOVE... YET WE HAD NEVER EVEN SPOKEN
IF WE SHOULD EVER MEET
I HELPED POOR LITTLE VERA IN EVERY WAY--UNTIL SHE HELPED HERSELF TO MY BEAU!
THERE'S A CROWD IN LOVE
TOO SHY FOR LOVE

The single-page features are a hoot. One is a young lady's guide for getting ready in the morning. After a "beautifying" breakfast of "fruit juice, cereal, toast, and coffee," the page recommends she "check once over: slip not showing, stocking seams straight, suit pressed spic-and-span, gloves clean and neat."

Readers of this comic could also get the best five-to-10-years-old advice on their T.Q. (telephone quotient), acting their age, how to lose a man, the rules of romance, being a little independent (but, apparently, just a little), and the answer to that most important of questions: "Is he for you?"

Hey, if you can't trust in what you read in comic books ...

TOP 10 FAVORITE COMIC BOOK COVERS

CHOSEN BY RICHARD M. BROWN

Top 10 Crossovers (plus two)

Richard M. Brown is a frequent ***CBG*** letter-writer. The Detroit, Mich.-area media have profiled his collection multiple times. It has also appeared in a newsletter and video release for his fellow employees of the United States Postal Service, from which he is newly retired.

A huge fan of *Smallville*, Brown has astounding pop-culture trivia knowledge, and his ability to make connections between his favorite shows and comics is nothing short of extraordinary. Recently, he wrote, "I worked at uncovering 10 key crossover comic books. Here are my picks. I also have an honorable mention to the list: Spider-Man's battle with Doctor Doom in *Amazing Spider-Man* #5 (Oct 63)."

10.

The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
MARVEL 12¢
14 JULY
WOW?! JUST WAIT TILL YOU SEE "The GREEN GOBLIN!"
GUEST-STARRING NONE OTHER THAN THAT RAMPAGING POWERHOUSE, THE INCREDIBLE HULK!

Amazing Spider-Man #1 © 1964 Marvel; art by Steve Ditko; scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions

***Amazing Spider-Man* #14 (Jul 64).** *The Hulk was nobody to The Green Goblin's first appearance.*

Orig. price: 12¢ Current NM price: $13,300

9.

TALES OF SUSPENSE
MARVEL 12¢
49 JAN
GUEST-STARRING! BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH "X-MEN" MAGAZINE
THE ANGEL
MY POWER JETS ARE EXHAUSTED! I'M FALLING! LOOKS LIKE THE ANGEL HAS DEFEATED IRON MAN!
MARVEL

Tales of Suspense #49 © 1964 Marvel; art by Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko

***Tales of Suspense* #49 (Jan 64).** *While the focus is on the Iron Man-Angel fight, it's also the first crossover between The Avengers and The X-Men.*

Orig. price: 12¢ Current NM price: $775

8.

Strange Tales Annual #2 © 1963 Marvel; art by Jack Kirby and Sol Brodsky; scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions

***Strange Tales Annual* #2 (1963).** *It's a scarce Spider-Man appearance in The Human Torch's solo series.*

Orig. price: 25¢ Current NM price: $350

7.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
12¢
THE Fantastic Four
12
MAR
AT LAST!!! the FANTASTIC FOUR meet THE HULK!
THE HULK IS NEARBY! I CAN FEEL IT!
ANOTHER SECOND AND I'LL DESTROY THEM ALL!!

Fantastic Four #12 © 1963 Marvel; art by Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko; scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions

Fantastic Four* #12 (Mar 63).** *Released with the same cover date as* ***Amazing Spider-Man *#1, it ties that issue for the first Marvel crossover.*

Orig. price: 12¢ Current NM price: $2,300

6.

Fantastic Four #25 and #26 © 1964 Marvel; art by Jack Kirby, George Roussos, and Sol Brodsky

***Fantastic Four* #25 and #26 (tie, Apr and May 64).** *The Incredible Hulk appears alone in both issues — and The Avengers (including Captain America) appear in #26.*

Orig. prices: 12¢ & Current NM prices: $550 (#25), $600 (#26)

5.

12¢
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
2 GREAT FEATURE-LENGTH SPIDER-MAN THRILLERS!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR THINKS I'M TRAPPED! BUT THEY DON'T SUSPECT MY REAL POWER!
the CHAMELEON STRIKES!

Amazing Spider-Man #1 © 1963 Marvel; art by Steve Ditko; scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions

***Amazing Spider-Man* #1 (Mar 63).** *This classic story even received the tribute of having the cover reprinted on a U.S. postage stamp.*

Orig. price: 12¢ Current NM price: $27,100

4.

Green Lantern #76 © 1970 DC, art by Neal A

Green Lantern #76 (Apr 70). *Green Arrow teams up with Green Lantern to begin the classic story arc of "relevant" stories.*
Orig. price: 15¢ Current NM price: $725

3.

Justice League of America #1

Justice League of America #21 and #22 (tie, Aug and Sep 63). *The Justice Society of America makes its full Silver Age appearance in an adventure with The JLA.*
Orig. prices: 12¢ @ Current NM prices: $480 (#21), $360 (#22)

2.

The Flash #123 © 1961 DC, art by Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson

The Flash #123 (Sep 61). *The Silver Age Flash (Barry Allen) meets the Golden Age Flash (Jay Garrick), and the DC Universe expands.*
Orig. price: 10¢ Current NM price: $9,500

1.

52 BIG PAGES
MAY JUNE
NO. 76
SUPERMAN
SUPERMAN
DOUBLE-FEATURE!
BATMAN, THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE, JOINS FORCES WITH THE MAN OF STEEL TO BECOME...
"The MIGHTIEST TEAM ON EARTH!"
LOIS IN DANGER! THIS IS A JOB FOR SUPERMAN!
NO, THIS IS A JOB FOR BATMAN!

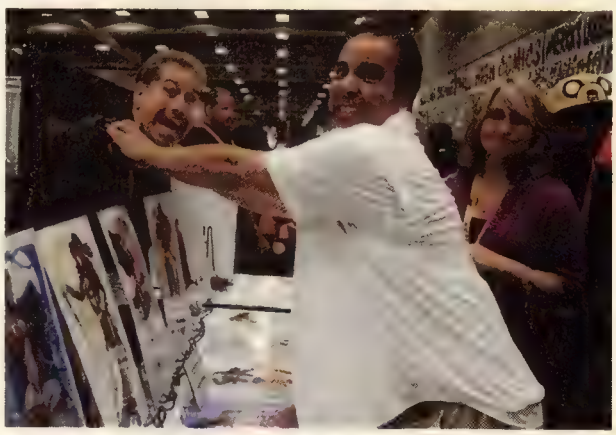
Superman #76 © 1952 DC, art by Win Mortimer; Scan Courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions

Superman #76 (May 52). *Batman and Superman learn each other's secret identities. This is the most famous and important super-hero team-up of them all.*
Orig. price: 10¢ Current NM price: $1,100

Wish you were there at Comic-Con International: San Diego ...

San Diego 2012: A scrapbook!

by **MAGGIE THOMPSON**



(Eisner Awards left to right above:) Writer-artist Darwyn Cooke relaxed after the cermonies, when he'd won two awards for *Richard Stark's Parker: The Martini Edition*, which he'd both written and drawn. *Wee Pals* creator Morrie Turner received The Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award and noted that he'd spoken at the very first San Diego Comic-Con. Writer Mark Waid showed no tension at the show before the Friday night awards, where he won for his work on *Daredevil*, *Irredeemable*, and *Incorruptible*.

Those who were unaware that comics writer Jonathan Ross is also a comedic talk-show host must have quickly caught on, as he prefaced his segment of the ceremonies by assuring those who did not win that they were, indeed, utter losers.

Could the competition for awards go too far? Not in this case: Though Jimmy Palmiotti seems bent on throttling Billy Tucci, it's clear from the relaxed enjoyment of Amanda Conner that such moments of drama are apparently routine among these three artists — and non-threatening. (P.S. It'd be cool to see Amanda as a guest at an upcoming SDCC: Just a thought.)

Comic-Con and comics are for kids, too! As those who cared for young attendees found entertainment, children's comics creators shared in the fun. (Left to right:) James Kochalka's *Dragon Puncher Island* (already a choice of *A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics*) won an Eisner Award. *Parent's Guide* co-author Scott Robins appeared on program panels. Raina Telgemeier (who won an Eisner Award for *Smile* in 2011) brought previews of *Drama* (her next book). And I gave Jill Thompson her *Parent's Guide* copy, where her work is also a choice.

Eric Shanower (left) has won Eisner Awards for his work for young readers in his scripts for Marvel's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *The Marvelous Land of Oz*. At this year's show, he demonstrated the iPad app for his other award-winning series, this one for adults: *Age of Bronze*. That series brings together the storylines that make up the tale of the fall of Troy into a coherent adventure; in it, the writer-artist incorporates material of the classics with current archaeological research. Using the app (available on iTunes), readers will be able, not only to read the comic-book pages (as shown here), but also to identify the characters, check his sources, and go behind the scenes for more background information via a hyperlinked reader's guide by Thomas Beasley.

Once a year, the entirety of downtown San Diego is filled with images of comics, from costume-wearing attendees to lightpole pennants to gigantic images of pop-culture characters from animation, films, and the printed page. In this case, a gigantic balloon of *Adventure Time*'s Finn looked out over San Diego, one image facing the convention center, the other facing the city itself.

Photos © 2012 Maggie Thompson

In the past, a chunk of the front of the exhibit hall has been occupied by a wall holding shelves and shelves (and shelves) of books of comics, both hardcovers and trade paperbacks, from Chuck Rozanski's Mile High enterprises (both online and brick-and-mortar). This year, Chuck outdid himself with the addition of pull-out drawers filled with short boxes packed with alphabetized back issues. He showed me his system: lateral files with the fronts of the pull-out drawers removed. ("If you're planning to use the system, be sure to check for drawer fronts that can be unscrewed.") How many comic books did he manage to pack into those files? He estimated the stock on hand at 50,000 issues — and it was difficult to find a quiet spot at any point in the display, as customers pushed past us, want lists in hand, looking to fill the holes in their collections.

Mark Evanier was host of a seemingly non-stop array of panels throughout the convention. (Upper left:) In the middle of the Quick Draw! panel, "Fake Stan Lee" interrupted Mark to provide his vision of a number of possible super-heroes based on audience-suggested attributes. (Upper right:) At the conclusion of a panel of voice artists, Mark brought on Stan Freberg, who holds the record for the longest career in voicing for animation. (The audience gave Freberg a standing ovation.)

Old friends join us again! Earlier cons saw Jim Sokolowski as a representative of DC, then Marvel. This year, he was here as the new Senior Vice President, Sales & Business Development of Archie Comic Publications. He was clearly excited about the opportunities offered by the Archie properties, some of which haven't appeared for years.

And ... wrapping things up Sunday evening ... many folks attended one or another "we loved it but it's over" events. At one such, host and T-shirt master Bob Chapman (of Graphitti) posed with artist-writer Batton Lash (of *Supernatural Law*).

MAGGIE THOMPSON took the center pose between (left) Heidi MacDonald of *www.comicsbeat.com* and (right) writer-editor Anina Bennett after the Eisner Awards ceremony. Celebrities abounded. (Behind Heidi are Bill Morrison of Bongo Comics and artist Steve Leialoha, for example.) Had fun at a convention recently? Join the discussion via *CBGXtra.com* or *Oh, So?* Maggie's website is *www.maggiethompson.com*, and she Tweets as *ThompsonMaggie*.

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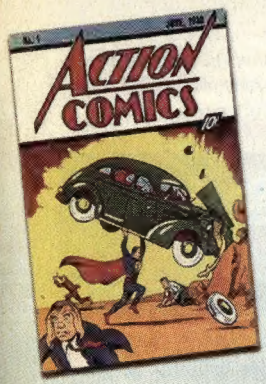

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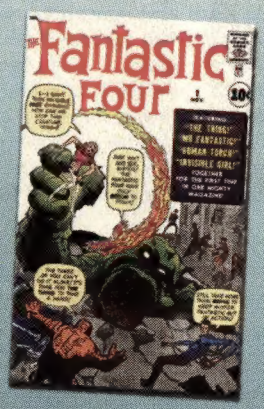

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Report from the road: Comic-Con International: San Diego

Peter's panels and parties 'port

by **PETER DAVID**

I've noticed an interesting personal trend when it comes to Comic-Con International: San Diego: My saturation point declines in inverse proportion to my age. In other words, the older I get, the sooner I'm ready to go home.

This year, by Wednesday at 8:30 p.m., I'd had enough.

It's nothing that the convention is doing wrong. It just becomes a bit more of an endurance test every year. But let's focus on the *positives*:

First, it seemed to me that there were far fewer cases of traffic through the dealer's room being brought to a halt thanks to people taking photos. The egomaniac in me would like to think it was my shouting about this very thing in my Fan/Pro Bill of Rights. Probably not, but you never know.

Second, I was on the most varied array of panels I've participated on in years. In no particular order:

Stan Lee's World of Heroes. It celebrated the debut of Stan's new Youtube channel, which will feature — among other things — a new Web series Kathleen and I created called "Head Cases." It tells the story of a young, cynical super-guy who goes by the name Thunderhead due to his ability to create devastatingly loud, thunderous blasts by striking his head against solid objects. Unfortunately, he's not invulnerable — and, when he knocked himself cold during his debut (attempting to thwart a bank robbery), the resulting video went viral and he's been a joke ever since. The story tracks his redemption — or possible descent into villainy. And in a supporting role, Stan Lee in the role he was born to play: Stan Lee.

After Earth. Bob Greenberger, Mike Friedman, and I have been doing development work and world-building for an upcoming film in 2013 that will star Will and Jaden Smith. I was initially concerned because much of the hall was filled with families who had gotten there early for the *Adventure Time* panel that was to follow. Screenwriter Gary Whitta, also on the panel, was frustrated by the Tweets he was getting from his fans who couldn't get in because the hall was jammed with white-hatted children and their parents. Nevertheless, the panel seemed to go over well, and the *After Earth* comic that Bob and Mike wrote (and that was a San Diego exclusive edition) was well received.

Marvel Now. Understand that it wasn't all that long ago that I was a fan sitting in the audience, watching panels of professionals talking about comics. So my inner fanboy still gets jazzed, when I'm on a panel with top Marvel creators talking about what we have coming out next.

Epic Mickey II. Since I wrote the graphic-novel adaptation of the upcoming sequel to the videogame, Disney asked if I would attend the presentation for it. Game creator Warren Spector made sure to bring specially made Oswald hats that all the panelists were obliged to wear, so somewhere out there are photos of Marv Wolfman and me wearing rabbit ears.

Quick Draw. It's the always-hilarious panel in which moderator Mark Evanier puts artists Sergio Aragonés (pictured), Scott Shaw!, and a guest artist (Keith Knight this year) through their paces with artistic improvs. Plus he let me play one of his challenging games, "Hidden Words," which always runs the risk of my looking either brilliant or like a total idiot. Or both. On Saturday night, we wound up having dinner with Mark, along with his lovely significant other, Carolyn Kelly (daughter of Walt), and the always-lovely Maggie Thompson. Mark regaled us with anecdotes from his show-biz past. I keep wondering why he hasn't written an autobiography with all these stories because it would be incredibly entertaining.

The Random House party. I don't generally do well at evening parties, but this was a rare exception. It was held in a large pub, and Kath and I got there early enough to snag a table that oversaw everything else. I'm not much for mingling; I prefer to wait for the party to come to me. We were there 15 minutes, and suddenly Warren and his wife, Caroline, with George R.R. Martin in tow, showed up and made a beeline for us. They all sat down with us, and, just like that, we were suddenly sitting at the Cool Kids Table, and such people as Christopher Paolini were coming over to us. So that was fun.

And lastly, no description of this year's con would be complete without a mention of the guys who were waving crosses and informing us that we were all going to burn in Hell. At one point I walked up to them and said, "I just want to say, I have to applaud your total commitment to cosplaying a religious nut. You're really selling it. Bravo. Well done." They didn't seem to appreciate my sense of humor. So few do.

PETER DAVID, can be followed on Twitter (***peterdavid_pad***), visited at his website at ***www.peterdavid.net***, or written to at P.O. Box 239, Bayport, NY 11705. His book, ***Writing for Comics and Graphic Novels with Peter David***, is available from F+W's Impact imprint at ***www.impact-books.com***.

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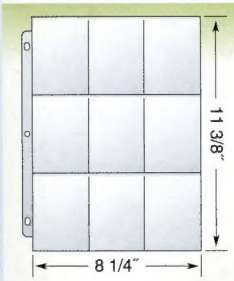

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THOUGH THE WORLD MAY MOCK PETER PARKER, THE TIMID TEEN-AGER...
...IT WILL SOON MARVEL AT THE AWESOME MIGHT OF SPIDER-MAN!
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO YOU, FROM THE EDITOR—ABOUT THE NEW AMAZING!

July 8, 2012
CGC 5.0 **SOLD! $11,950**

April 22, 2012
CGC 2.5 **SOLD! $4,780**

February 5, 2012
CGC 1.0 **SOLD! $2,868**

April 15, 2012
CGC 4.0 **SOLD! $7,170**

June 3, 2012
CGC 3.0 **SOLD! $6,273**

June 17, 2012
CGC 2.5 **SOLD! $4,780**

June 24, 2012
CGC 4.0 **SOLD! $7,409**

June 24, 2012
CGC 2.5 **SOLD! $5,377**

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